MOSES

A Drama by

Charles Hovey Brown

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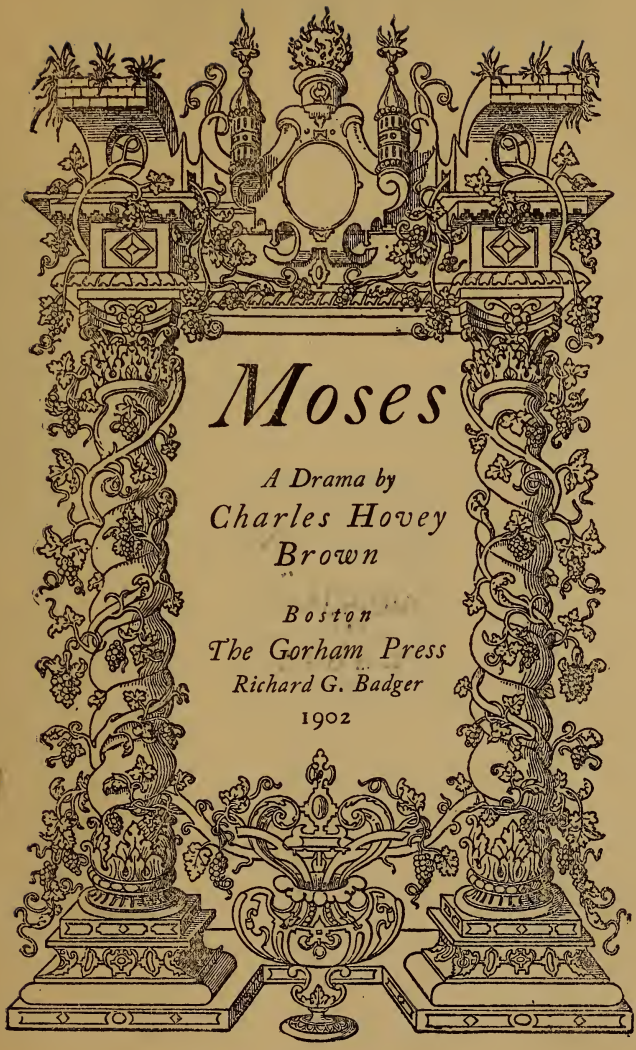

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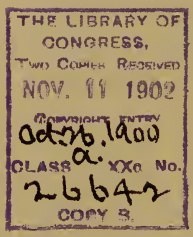

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PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

MOSES
AARON, brother of Moses
JOSHUA
RAMESES, king of Egypt
MENEPHTHAH, afterward king of Egypt
SETI, a priest
PENTAUR, a poet, friend of Moses
MIRIAM, sister of Moses
JOCHEBED, mother of Moses
PRINCESS, foster mother of Moses
ZIPPORAH, wife of Moses
CHORUS OF YOUTHS
CHORUS OF MAIDENS
SHEPHERDS
HERALD
TWO LORDS
Lords, courtiers and others

ACT FIRST.

Court of the Temple of Karnac at Thebes.

SCENE FIRST.—SETI and TWO LORDS.

FIRST LORD: The days of Rameses draw to their close,
And who shall follow him upon the throne
Becomes the question of most moment,—that
Which most concerns the state. Of all his sons,
Or all the scions of the royal stock,
Which is most worthy, which most capable,
To wield the sceptre he so gloriously
Has held for Egypt's honor, now becomes
The problem we must solve; which as we solve
Determines for the years to come the weal
Or woe of Egypt. Say, most noble priest,
Who'st had the training of the princely boys,
In which of all the royal neophytes,
Shows most the spirit of the radiant God
Whom we adore, the light and strength of Egypt?
SETI: 'Tis well you ask that question; for the king
Of Egypt should be he who most reveals
The spirit of the God; above all he
Who has displayed the mind most teachable.
SECOND LORD: Perhaps you'd have a priest upon the throne?
SETI: Priests have not made the worst of rulers.
SECOND LORD: Aye,
When splendid quiet is the state's chief aim.
SETI: Can any ruler grant a better boon
Than peace, so it be not inglorious?
FIRST LORD: Has any ruler done for Egypt more
Than Rameses, in whose long reign no year
Has been unmarked by battles, that have brought
Fame to the arms of Egypt, and renown
Throughout the earth, such as no previous king
But Thothmes has achieved?
SETI: Doubtless the fame
Of Egypt never was more widely spread;
But war has not been under Rameses
The grand ebullience of the people's strength,
As under the great Thothmes; but the forced
Expression of a feverish vigor, that
Has brought exhaustion in its train, and ills
We shall be long recovering from. No state
Can spend its strength forever in vast wars
Of conquest, more than without sleep a man
Can labor with impunity to heap
Up hoards of treasure. Madness must result
Both to the individual and the state
From such immoderate ambition.

SECOND LORD: Aye,
You priests have always been indifferent
To Egypt's glory, and would give us now
A king of prayers and auspices, who with
Weak piety would let you rule the state.
But rule you shall not, if I have a voice
To seat a warrior upon the throne,
Who shall extend beyond the utmost bounds
Reached by the empire of great Rameses
The limits of our sway.
SETI: If we oppose
The warlike policy so long pursued,
'Tis not because we lag one step behind
The proudest nobles in our dear regard
For Egypt's greatness; but because we feel
It is the spendthrift's blindness to send out
Year after year fresh armies, to contend
With barbarous powers, that breed new multitudes
To conquer us at last, by wearing out
Our strength although it triumph for the nonce.
And what the gain accrues to Egypt from
Her conquests? Can we boast they bring us good,
Beyond the glory of subduing lands
We cannot hold? A questionable good,
For which we sacrifice our manhood! Nay,
It is not Egypt that reaps gain from such
Vain glory; but the nobles who can glut
Thereby their lust for gold, which they procure,
As much as from the foes that they subdue,
From our own poor, whom Egypt's ruin makes
Their bondmen.
FIRST LORD: Well we understand your drift.
Although of noble blood, you are at heart
One of those Israelites, whom Rameses
Has deemed in his good wisdom only fit
To do that servile work which must be done
In every state, leaving the nobler free
To follow in the path where glory leads.
SETI: The priests of Egypt are no alien stock,
Who feel no thrill responsive at the thought
Of Egypt's glory; but her loyal sons,
Whose hearts throb with the warm flow of her life
When she is honored, but experience,
If she have met defeat, the fatal chill
Which makes their blood run sluggishly. They pray
As you for Egypt's greatness; but they deem
Her greatness will be furthered less by arms
Than by the liberal arts of laurelled peace;
Therefore they would have on the throne a king
Whose name should be to every artisan
An earnest of protection, and to those
Whom genius has decreed to build their thought
In sculptured granite or the living word
An inspiration.
SECOND LORD: Aye, for arms exchange
The scholar's mace, and let the court be made
A school for tradesmen, artisans and scribes,
For whose dear sake, that they may exercise

Their arts unhindered, peace must be maintained
Inviolable, although honor succumb,
And all go topsy-turvy!
SETI: Honor, no!
But Egypt's honor is not lost or won
Upon the field of battle merely. In
The hearts of all her citizens it dwells,
Inviolable while they are prosperous
And happy; but defamed when in the state
Division creeps, nurtured in that rank air
Which rises like a deadly miasm
Above the state, when ends that bring the gain
Of glory to a faction are pursued,
For which the multitude must suffer.
SECOND LORD: Faction!
Who calls the hydra-headed faction forth
But you who urge the many to revolt?
SETI: 'Tis ye who wake the embers of revolt;
Not we, who would recall you ere too late;
Back to the path of honor that for goal
Sets the whole people's welfare, not the good
Of warrior nobles merely. We would take
The bandage from your eyes, that you may see
The chasm opening wider in the state,
Which if it be not closed ere long must lead
To civil warfare.
SECOND LORD: Well, we are content
To cast the die whatever be the issue.
Nor is it our concern to vex ourselves
For others' welfare. But pray tell us who,
In your good judgment should ascend the throne
Of Rameses.
SETI: Were merit to decide,
There could not be a choice of candidates.
Nor do I need to name him to your ears:
For his clear fame resounds throughout the land,
In arms not impotent, but most renowned
For wisdom, wherein he has not a peer
For one so young.
FIRST LORD: You are not scant of praise.
Assuredly.
SETI: He merits it.
SECOND LORD: No doubt,
When priestly interests concern the judge.
SETI: Believe me, it is not the priest who speaks,
But patriot, when I say, of all whose name
And qualities entitle to pretend
To Egypt's crown and sceptre, there is none
Who can compare with Moses; none as he
Who has of all the learning of his time
So great command, or who such earnest gives
Of genius to control our destiny.
FIRST LORD: And is he only fit to rule the state?
SETI: What if our destiny were in his hand!
SECOND LORD: To thrust him by would conquer destiny.
SETI: Nay, but defy it to our infinite loss.
But it is useless that we bandy more
Words that seem not to bring us to accord.

Nor does time serve me for the task. Farewell!
I must hence to my priestly offices.
(Seti goes out.)

SCENE SECOND.—The TWO LORDS.

FIRST LORD: 'Tis as I thought. The priests are going to force
Upon King Rameses the choice of Moses
As his successor. They expect to find
In him, an adept in all their mysteries,
One to advance their interests; and sooth
To say, they have not chosen their candidate
Unwisely if ability decide;
For Moses is not one to be despised,
Or lightly to be thought of. Even now
He is a match in learning with the best,
Reaching as if by instinct that clear grasp
Of principles, which strongest minds attain
Only through years of study. Nor is he
In active exercise a weakling, either.
I doubt not with distinction he could lead
An army; but I doubt he were inclined
To follow in the course of Rameses,
That has accrued so largely to our gain
And glory.
SECOND LORD: Mine your doubt is. I as you
Surmise that Moses would be on the throne
The priest, who most would favor in his choice
Of servants priests and scribes, setting aside
The warrior class to wither with inaction.
Nor is it of good augury to us,
That he has openly shown sympathy
With bondmen, who are set by Rameses
To build us granaries and arsenals,
That his successors on a larger scale
May carry out his warlike policy.
It looks as Moses disapproves, and would,
If opportunity should offer, set
At naught this policy; if not that slaves
And aliens shall be called to govern us.
FIRST LORD: Alas, for Egypt should it come to pass
That our traditions all be set aside
For upstart greatness!
SECOND LORD: Never shall it be.
This Moses must be made to Rameses
Obnoxious, that choice may not light on him.
But yet his mother, Pharaoh s daughter—rather
She who is his mother by repute;
But who, if whispered rumor speak the truth,
Adopted him, a foundling, who no claim
Has but her pity to the royal name—
Will doubtless push her influence to the extreme
To have him after Rameses supreme.
Nor is there any who now holds so great
An influence as she within the state:
For to her interests the enfeebled mind
Of Rameses she has known how to bind,
That he will carry out the policy

That in her wisdom seems the best to be.
But I misjudge her greatly, if the tool
She be not of the priests, who through her rule.
She is the hand, but they the guiding arm
That will not hesitate to work us harm.

FIRST LORD: What say you! Moses is but by repute
The son of Pharaoh's daughter? That a waif
He was, saved by her pity from the death
To which he was abandoned?

SECOND LORD: So it seems.

FIRST LORD: But why if such a rumor were abroad
Is it not more exploited? Peradventure
His features, rather of the Hebrew cast
Than the Egyptian, though as far removed,
In their refinement from the brutishness
Of their's who labor in our brickyards, as
Intelligence from coarseness, has given rise
To such a rumor.

SECOND LORD: Ay, but whence those features?
Friend, I know it for a certain fact,
That Moses is of Hebrew parentage,
Whom Pharaoh's daughter saved from frowning death,
And would have all believe her son, howe'er
His countenance, belying the imposture,
Unmask suspicions that cannot be voiced.

FIRST LORD: But whence know you this fact?

SECOND LORD: Listen and I
Will tell you.

FIRST LORD: All intent am I to hear.

SECOND LORD. 'Tis now some one and twenty years ago,
A little more or less, when the decree
Went forth, that every son of Hebrew sire
Born henceforth should not be allowed to live,
That so should that exuberance be stopped
Which threatened to o'erpopulate the land
With slaves of alien parentage—went forth,
But only to be carried out in part;
For many were the ruses found to evade
The provisions: fraud, connivance of the law's
Executors, and pity which revolts
From heartless policy. So it resulted
That but a few were slain, and policy
Was baffled. Of those saved was Moses—saved
By woman's pity, which obliterates,
In presence of a baby's helplessness,
Earthly distinctions, making of one kin
Princess and slave. His mother, knowing this,
When every other means had failed to save
Her baby, wise in her imprudence, laid
Upon the river's brink, where Pharaoh's daughter
Came with the maidens of her train to bathe.
The princess saw, and pitying, as her own
Brought up the foundling, who, revealing since
Earnest of greatness, she would have him king,
In her reputed offspring to become
Egypt's most noted woman.

FIRST LORD: Know you this
For certainty?

SECOND LORD: I will be sworn 'tis true.
FIRST LORD: It is a lever of tremendous force.
SECOND LORD: Ay, that it is.
FIRST LORD: How happens it that you
Have hit upon so choice a bit of news,
Which rumor argus-eyed has overlooked?
SECOND LORD: Conditions at the time made secrecy
Imperative. Wherefore the princess bade
Her maidens, with the fear of her displeasure,
Never to broach a word of what they'd seen.
FIRST LORD: And one has broken her mandate it appears.
SECOND LORD: Yes, recently, and to my willing ears.
FIRST LORD: What was the spell allured it from her heart?
SECOND LORD: You'd ask not if you knew the sorcerer's art.
FIRST LORD: Methinks I have an inkling of your power.
A moonlight night, and in a spicy bower
Two hearts alone that in sweet unison beat.
And lips that all their hidden thought repeat.
SECOND LORD: You, too, are in the secret and have bought
The favor of some beauty of the court.
FIRST LORD: Tut, tut, such matter ought not to be spoken of.
We blazon not abroad the victories of love.
SECOND LORD: Well, as you will; nor could we for the time say more;
For I have heard a step along the corridor.
FIRST LORD: Methinks I ought to know that step; 'tis Menephthath.
SECOND LORD: His heavy tread betrays the haughty lord of war.

SCENE THREE.—SAME, with MENEPHTHAH.

MENEPHTHAH: Welcome, most noble lords and friends, whom I have sought
For counsel in the crisis now in our affairs,
When one misstep may ruin all our cherished plans,
And seat the priestly aspirant upon the throne.
FIRST LORD: Such as it is, our counsel we are fain to give;
But what is more of moment, we will give the support
Of our good arms and properties to advance your cause,
That you, the rightful aspirant to Egypt's throne,
And him of all most worthy, may become her king.
SECOND LORD: Ay, we will stickle not at any means, that you
In your good wisdom deem expedient to use
To advance your interests. We will not hesitate,
If need be, to embroil the land in civil war,
That after Rameses we still may have a king,
And not be forced to bow to women and to priests,
Who would lay Egypt's honor prostrate to a slave.
MENEPHTHAH: I thank you, worthy friends. Not less did I expect
From your proved loyalty. But I sincerely trust
That we may not be driven to the last extreme
Of civil warfare. I would rather place the crown
Upon my head not steeped with fraticidal blood
Than take it with the sword. Yet they who would withhold
Shall find I am no weakling, who will tamely yield
To be stripped of my rights; but if worse come to worst,
I will not hesitate to drench the land in gore,

So I may have my own, and on their heads who drive
To such extremity, not mine, shall rest the guilt.

FIRST LORD: We heartily concur in all that you have said.
The imprint of the gory hand upon the crown
Must dim its lustre; yet, though dimmed, it is a prize
Not to be cast aside, because the priests have bidden,
And their adherents who extol weak righteousness
Denounce the ambitious aspirant, though legal right
And custom justify to the uttermost his claim.

SECOND LORD: O, fie upon their boasted righteousness! I hate
The hypocrisy that hides beneath this mask a heart
As full of vague ambitious yearnings as the worst
That cloaks its projects but from policy; but blasted
With impotency that seeks to masquerade as virtue.
I dare avouch no saint has ever shown himself
So virtuous that, if a moment were relaxed
The tension on the bit of weakness that restrains
His cravings, he would prove in the pursuit of his
Ambitious aims the peer of any who through seas
Of blood have waded to a throne. Without suspicion
The weak cannot make show of virtue. Only strength
Is capable thereof, and will be given credence
For loyalty unfeigned. I do not hesitate
To avow for my part alienation from the priests
And all they stand for. To defeat their ends I would
Not shrink from any means my judgment may approve,
Upon the ground that they are reprehensible.
And so I say again, my heart and hand are yours
For any policy that may command success.

MENEPHTHAH: Good friends, you shall not rue devotion to my cause,
If I am able to reward your faithfulness.
If I succeed you shall be honored; if I fail,
My friends perforce fail with me. I can do no more
Than to assure my helpers that indissolubly
With mine are joined their fortunes; that with me they rise
To glory or decline into obscurity.
But most shall share my happier fortune, if it come,
They who in my eclipse most link their lot to mine.
But now enough of compliments and promises.
Let's to the point. What know you of the priests' designs?

FIRST LORD: They would unquestionably seat Moses on the throne.

SECOND LORD: They wish no warrior king, but one of slaves and scribes.

FIRST LORD: Egypt's exchequer they lament will bear no more
The constant drain of armies and muniments of war.

SECOND LORD: It is their plea to lower the nobles who would pluck
The laurel wreaths of victory which they begrudge.

FIRST LORD: They crave that rest from strenuous effort that may give
Time to collect resources to adorn and build
New temples more imposing than any we have built.

SECOND LORD: Not that, my brother; that's the plea which they prefer
Of interest, as befits them, for the Gods; but their
Chief interest is to abase the warrior caste.
But this time they have hit, my liege, upon a snag,

Which either has escaped their vigilance, or else
If they're aware of it they deem it policy
To hide the knowledge, which they think they only have,
So hoping to delude the many; but perchance
Their policy may founder on that very snag.
Perhaps you know already, though I scarcely think so,
That he the priests would seat upon the lofty throne
Of Egypt is no scion of the Egyptian stock;
But one of alien blood and servile parentage,
Whom fortune as in irony has reared a prince,
As if to mock prescription and to cast a slur
Upon the noble blood of kings, by thrusting forth
The foundling of a slave to sieze the crown and sceptre.

MENEPTHAH: What say you? Moses no scion of the royal stock!
Of alien parentage! The foundling of a slave!
A dainty morsel of sweet news if this be true!

SECOND LORD: It is, my liege, as I am here. But if it were not—
Well, what's that to you? If people have been taught
To think so and this serve the ends of policy,
Why not make use of what is given you, asking not
Of Rumor sureties? If in deceiving you
She further your ambitions, that's not your affair.
You've simply taken facts as you have found, and used
For your advantage, which all do as they are able.
If scrupulous to ask of every fact its sponsors,
Lest it deceive you, you will vex yourself all to
No purpose, and will lose your opportunity.

MENEPHTHAH: But tell me more at length, if this be not of your
Invention, as I am inclined to think it is,
(You'll surely pardon me if I have done you wrong)
How came you to have learned what Gossip has o'erlooked?

SECOND LORD: Tne story's long, but you shall hear it and can
make
What use thereof may please you.

FIRST LORD: Whist! I hear a step.

MENEPHTHAH: If I mistake not it is Moses. Well, I know
That measured step and slow, of one who does not act
Till firm conviction have made clear the way ahead,
Which cannot be avoided. We must set aside
Consideration of the matter I would hear
Until occasion serve, with no intruder near.

SCENE FOURTH.—THE SAME, with MOSES.

MENEPHTHAH: Welcome, most worthy prince, whose praise is on
all lips.
What brings you to the court, which you have not been wont
To frequent much of late, being preoccupied
With searchings into hidden things and ponderings deep,
Within the dreamy halls and shady aisles of On,
Where learning and pale meditation have their seat
Established since the earliest days of Egypt's greatness?

FIRST LORD: We do thee homage, prince, upon whose noble brow,
Where felon time has not yet stolen the graces youth
Endowed thee with, hoar wisdom has the laurel crown
Implanted, honoring ripeness far beyond thy years.

SECOND LORD: We lip the praises thy young glory in the walks
Of studious peace, prince, has extorted from the hearts
Of Egypt's millions.

MOSES: Friends, I thank you for your words
Of welcome, which I would that I might truly merit.
Meseems, however, wisdom is not much to boast of,
That shows one only life's insoluble mystery.
I have learned nothing but that all this gallant world
Is a mere show, as insubstantial as the cloud
That blots the blue face of the heavens and vanishes;
But what the cause of all I have not learned, nor what
The meaning of my own existence in this world
Of shadows.

MENEPHTHAH: Others equals not of you in wisdom,
Or in the fame thereof at least, find no such trouble.

MOSES: Perhaps they're wiser; or, if not wiser, at least can act
Unvexed by questions of their origin and end,
As I cannot. Do what I will, the question ere
Intrudes itself upon my thought, Who art thou, Moses?
What is the object of thy life? To eat and drink
And to be merry, or to make my powers subserve
Some worthier purpose? With as much insistency
The question presses for solution, Why hast thou
Been reared a prince, while millions who deserve no less
Are doomed to wear away their days in drudgery
Which brings no gain but bare subsistence?

MENEPHTHAH: Pooh! I do
Not vex myself over the state of others. That
Is their affair, not mine. Mine is to serve myself,
Which if I do not, none will do it for me. Prince,
Methinks it ill comports with your high dignity
To think of slaves as if your brothers, having rights
Inalienable as yours.

MOSES: Perchance I were not more
Unselfish than were others; but the mystery
Is that such thoughts rise up unbidden and extrude
Thoughts I would rather harbor. With such urgency
These force themselves on my attention, that at times
I walk in my accustomed offices as one
Asleep, my mind abstracted from the things I do;
And more, a strange attraction draws me forth of late,
To find a solace, which I can no longer find
In books, amongst the servile many at their tasks,
Beholding whom, as if an arrow pierced my heart,
A sudden thrill of pity rises up unbidden,
Such as betokens kinship when a brother meets,
After long years of separation, one whose face
Time has so altered that he does not recognize.

SECOND LORD: That were not strange if facts should prove you were their brother.

MOSES: Why not? Beyond the ties of blood relationship,
Does custom institute a kinship, making those
Our brothers merely who are reared to like estate
Of privilege or culture, while the millions more,
Like us in feature and with sympathies the same,
Are aliens we're to have no fellow-feeling for,
But may as tools to advance our purposes employ
Without compunction, or as stepping stones to glory.

MENEPHTHAH: You would make war on social privilege and rank,
Without which there could be no state.

MOSES: Not in the least.
I see the need for difference in outward state
Too clearly, and appreciate the privileges
I have enjoyed too highly, to make war on them.
And yet this problem—this sphynx-riddle—everywhere
Confronting, presses for solution, of the millions
Sacrificed for our advantage. Why are we
Thus favored, while to them life bears so stern an aspect?

MENEPHTHAH: The question is an inconvenient one. I see
No good in raising this hobgoblin of our right
To our immunities. They're ours, and that's enough;
And let who will challenge our right to their possession.
Prince, I tell you for a truth, if we raise not
The spectre none will have the temerity to do it.

MOSES: Nay, nay, I raise no spectres; but cannot avoid
Beholding when I use my eyes, as you could not,
Were you not rendered blind by stolid prejudce.

SECOND LORD: Prince, do you call us blind?

MOSES: I can but call it blindness,
To force advantage to the extreme point of driving
Millions to such a state that death were preferable.
As one who, playing with a tiger, unaware
Of his wild strength, should rouse his native savagery,
So they run risk of doing who play a dangerous game
With men, within whose bosoms lies potentiality
More than the tiger's fierceness. Friends, you do not hear,
Because you close your ears, the growing mutterings
Of discontent like distant thunder, premonition
Of the approaching storm.

FIRST LORD: But never do such storms,
Howe'er portentous hang the clouds above us, break
Until the leader come to guide the multitude.

SECOND LORD: Perhaps the leader is at hand, or he who would be.

MOSES: I understand your meaning. You imply that I
Would lead the many in revolt against the power
Of Egypt. Never have I harbored such a thought.
But I would lead the people for the good of Egypt.
I would inaugurate a policy, if able,
That should call forth to their fruition all the powers
Of every man, that each might give his best to Egypt.
For such a purpose truly I do crave the throne;
But merely to pursue the present policy
Of aimless conquest and oppression I do not.

MENEPHTHAH: The sovereignty that you desire were tame to me.
'Tis power I crave, for no ulterior end; but power
For the delight of using—power that makes who wields
A god, the terror and the envy of mankind.
The might of Egypt's millions I would sway, that borne
Upon this living chariot I may ride rough-shod
Over the prostrate bodies of an adoring race.

FIRST LORD: That is a thought to fire the coldest fancy.

SECOND LORD: Aye,
'Tis better than a sentimental policy.
For my part I can stomach nothing of that creed
Would have the strong for weakness but the dance to lead.

MOSES: Alas, when Egypt's rulers are of such a mind!

MENEPHTHAH: Alas, when Egypt do not sturdy rulers find!

MOSES: Alas, when man for nothing but vainglory cares!
FIRST LORD: Alas, if we must all betake ourselves to prayers!
MOSES: Alas, when Pride and Hunger to war rush on apace!
SECOND LORD: Alas, when men for weakness would the strong abase!
MOSES: I say as you, and have no wish but to increase
Great Egypt's glory; but meseems this will be done
Most fully by that policy that will release
The powers now suppressed or dormant in each one.
MENEPHTHAH: Seek service of the slave and honor of the lord.
Lay on the one the utmost task that he can do;
And for the other find the sphere that will afford
The opportunity his penchant to pursue.
Such are my sentiments, and such of Rameses,
Whose long and glorious reign is drawing to its close.
Farewell! I leave you with your flattering dreams to please
Your fancy while I play a game to win or lose.
MOSES: Farewell! I covet not the honor which you seek.
I crave not sway o'er men and all that wealth can give.
Questions press on my heart of which I cannot speak.
I shrink life's tumult, knowing not for what I live.
(Menephthah and lords go out.)

SCENE FIVE.—MOSES alone.

MOSES: Go with your vain ambitions! I have no desire
To wear the crown of Rameses; nor is it likely
That I shall wear it, though the priests would thrust me forward;
For I perceive too clearly what conflicting forces
Are now at strife within the state, that he who reigns
Must stand alone, or must resolve to sacrifice
The many's interests to the few, which I cannot.
And yet there was a time—and that not long ago—
When to have reigned I would have left no stone unturned;
And I am confident I could have won o'er all
My rivals, and have ruled the land not without honor.
But now—those days seem more a dream than days I've lived
In sober earnest—I am changed—and what a change!
This dazzling pageantry of life, that so allured
Erewhile, I've come to look upon as all a show,
That charms not with its hollow splendor, while the question
More urgently each moment presses on my thought,
Who am I and for what am in the world? Nor till
This question has been answered can I bring myself
With singleness of purpose to exert my powers.
And I am restless—often am impelled to flee
From these associations that are irksome to me.
And yet I stay, though knowing well that I am doomed
To littleness, not being able to forget
Myself in action, wherefore all the ends of life
Elude me; knowing also that to win the goal,
Which I might win could I put forth all my best powers,
Were to be recreant to the call of destiny.
But hark! The good priest, Seti, who has been to me
A father, comes. Ah, if I could but lay my heart
All bare before him, and in his wise words could find
Balm for my spirit's wounds! But no, it cannot be.

My sorrows are not of the sort that he can heal;
Nor do I find help in the Gods he worships, whom
I have implored—no one more earnestly than I—
But all in vain, to teach me life's deep mystery.

SCENE SIX.—MOSES and SETI.

MOSES: Good father, you are ever welcome. I remember
That unto you as to no other I owe all
That wisdom of the ancients, which your patient care
Has helped to make me master of.
SETI: Not less, my pupil,
To see you pleases me, who the most tractable
To the stern discipline of study I have found
Of any who have walked with meditative brow
Those aisles for centuries devoted to the cause
Of learning.
MOSES: I have found, good father, joy therein,
Ah! How my spirit has been thrilled—to ecstasy
Been thrilled—oft by the noble thoughts of ancient sages,
Which I have pondered under thy instructive guidance!
I have been stirred to emulation when I've read
The deeds of men who have made Egypt great.
SETI: Moses,
I know it, and have felt that on you has descended
The mantle of their greatness. You are one in whom
The spirit of the great men who have lived and wrought
For Egypt's glory lives, enshrined within a temple
Not its unworthy dwelling place. With such a spirit
You have a form which images to every eye
The majesty of Egypt's most exalted heroes.
Instinctively who sees you pass proclaims you king,
Though bearing yet no title; for in you has God
Created kingliness, that crown and sceptre could
Not make more kingly, nor the lack thereof obscure.
MOSES: I am what God has made me; but——
SETI: But what, my son?
MOSES: Not to be Egypt's king.
SETI: She cannot find a nobler.
MOSES: Father, I know not what fate have in store for me;
But this I feel, that some deep mystery hangs o'er
My life; a mystery ere long to be revealed,
Upon which hangs my future and the fate of Egypt.
SETI: I do not doubt it, and what more momentously
Can touch your future and the fate of Egypt than
The kinghood, which God has ordained you to, unless
My eyes, my heart, my deepest instincts, all deceive me.
MOSES: There was a time I could have been ambitious—yea,
And that not long since, either—for the honor you
Would thrust upon me; but—how can I put in words
My thought?—I never used to feel a lack of words
To speak what I would utter—meseems a power within me
Forbids me this, but shows me yet no other course;
And so the fire of my ambition has been quenched;
And life, that to my eyes erewhile was so alluring,
No more beguiles me, but appals me, rather—life,
Which I behold a scene of misery and strife,
Where brother against brother lifts the murderous hand,
And no power I perceive the frenzy to withstand.

SETI: I do not wonder that you feel so; but the fact
Is God's most potent call for such as you to act.
What power can hold our factious lords in leash, and stay
The ills that threaten us, if one ordained to sway
The destinies of men, as you have given proof
You have been, from our struggles hold himself aloof?
No, no, the righteous and efficient must forego
Their personal feelings in the matter, to bring low
The selfish and ambitious, who would rule the state
But for their own base ends. There is no other fate
Than our supineness that compels us to be slaves
Of faction-mongers and a horde of upstart knaves.
'Tis not ambition calls you to the highest place;
But duty which you cannot shirk without disgrace.
MOSES: Too well I understand your reasoning; but foresee,
As you do not, that on the throne of Rameses
My arm were palsied, that I could not do the good
That you, by your enthusiasm rendered blind,
Would have me do. A cause I fear I should be rather
Of more contention than a queller of our strife.
SETI: My son, we're not to think too much upon the event,
But do the duty given us, whate'er the outcome;
And yours, unless I have egregiously misread
The decree of destiny, is to take up the sceptre,
Now falling from the palsied hand of Rameses,
And wield for Egypt's glory as our most potent kings.
MOSES: Believe me, that if God made clear this is my duty,
I shall not shrink from it, whatever foes withstand:
For at the call of duty I can dare all as
No craven; but the doubt if this be duty brings
The war within my bosom, and makes impotent
To act in the emergency.
SETI: If age, my son,
Have given authority which merits that I should
Be heard, I bid you for the honor of the priesthood,
And for the good of Egypt, as the call of heaven,
To sieze the sceptre from the hands that reach to grasp it,
Desirous only for the personal power 'twill bring.
MOSES: God knows that I esteem your judgment, father, and
Would do your bidding ere that of another—yea,
Would make my rawer judgment yield to yours when there
Were conflict, if the matter rested with myself.
In this a power, however, I know not what, o'errules me.
When I would do as you have bidden—and to speak truth
I have not been devoid of all ambition—stopped
I am, as by an impervious element, restricting
All movement thitherward. I find myself, and much
To my surprise—for you will bear me witness I
Have not been wont to be a bungler—a mere tyro,
Apparently foredoomed to fail, where others scarce
My equals in ability or training win
Successes that make me appear a fool. Chagrined
I have been at my proved incompetence, though feeling
I have the manhood to succeed but for the ban
That dwarfs me. What the meaning of this fact
I cannot fathom if it be not fate's decree,
That elsewhere lies the goal that has been set for me.

SETI: The purpose of your life will be made clear to you,
If to the leadings of the spirit you be true.
Yet still I think, in spite of all that you have said,
That by your hand the sceptre of Egypt must be swayed.
If not, I fear that evils we shrink from will befall.
Woe to the state rejects him whom the Gods shall call.
Doubtless the opposition you say that you have met
Will pass with all the foes that have your way beset.
The Gods would humble you, that when you reach the throne
You may feel that their might has given it, not your own.
So harbor not the thought that time may not yet bring
The call you hear not now to be great Egypt's king.
And I foresee for you a long and glorious reign.
The wisdom of great Thothmes shall live in you again.
Peace and prosperity shall bless your righteous sway;
And men shall long remember illustrious Moses' day.

(The curtain falls.)

ACT SECOND.

Before the walls of a treasure city or fortification. The body of a young man lies on a bier in the centre of the stage.

SCENE FIRST.

MIRIAM and CHORUS OF JEWISH MAIDENS, with cypress garlands on their heads.

MIRIAM: Ah, gentle youth, whose life too soon is gone,
Why liest thou low upon the bare, cold earth,
Who wast the equal in true, manly worth
Of any son
Of Israel's much-afflicted race?
Alas that we must bitterly bewail thy case!
The cruel fate that laid thee low
Before our stern, inveterate foe;
The tyrant whose red henchman's murderous steel
Stole thy young life, and in our grief no ruth doth feel!
Come hither, maidens, and your flowers strew
Upon the bier of Israel's fair young son,
Who hath in his life's blushing morning gone,
With the fresh dew
Of heaven still on his pure, young heart.
Bewail the direful ruins of the tyrant's art;
The wreck of noble manhood made
A desolation; weep him laid,
Low on the bare, cold ground, erewhile with life aglow.
Upon this consecrated earth your flowers strow.
(Maidens cast their flowers upon the bier and sing.)

CHORUS: Flowers we strew upon thy bier,
Flowers bedewed with many a tear,
Sweet youth, whom death hath stricken before the time.
Why art thou fallen, fallen in thy young prime,
Whom we erewhile were wont to see
Amongst us, with a step as free
As the gazelle's, and front as bold
As untamed lion's of the wold?
Alas! Alas! We bitterly bewail the fate,
That from the pride of manhood brought thee low,
Low as the earth whereon thou liest;
The cold earth that devours her offspring soon or late.
Today thou dost thy life in beauty show,
And ere the morrow dawn thou diest.

A VOICE (sings):
Earth, receive his gentle mould
Back into thy quickening womb;
And may it suffer there a change
Into something rare and strange!

From his dust let flowers bloom,
Far more lovely to behold
Than mortal eye hath ever seen
In woodland shade or meadow green.

A SECOND VOICE:

When through leafy bowers we wander,
Or beside the sluggish stream,
And behold some blossom yonder,
Growing like a lovely dream
From the slumbering earth, and breathe
The sweet perfume it gives forth,
May we feel him who beneath
Slumbers in the silent earth!

A THIRD VOICE:

He is low,—ah! wherefore stricken?—
Who but now—no other bolder—
Walked the earth in manly vigor.
Still he is, save as his golden
Locks are by the light winds shaken,
Dallying with them as to waken.

A FOURTH VOICE:

And wilt thou not awaken, lovely one,
To gaze with eagle eye upon the sun?
Cannot the breezes from thy slumber woo,
To brush away with early feet the dew,
As forth with all the lightness of the roe,
And strength of the maned lion thou dost go?

MIRIAM: No, never wilt thou waken from the sleep
That now has seized thy members: they shall fade,
As roses fade; and in the dark earth's deep
Recesses shall thy scattered dust be laid.
And nevermore the beauty that erewhile
In thy loved presence did our senses feed
Shall we behold. Howe'er our hearts may bleed,
Thou wilt not come our sorrow to beguile.

CHORUS: Ah, whither art thou gone, thou gentle one,
That thou dost not appear to our sad eyes?
In what night dost thou wander that the sun,
Which shines for us, upon thee does not rise?

A VOICE (sings):

Cruel Death, why didst thou prey
Upon his beauty? Couldst thou not
Have found some form, that was a blot
On the fair face of day,
To feed thy gluttony,
And left him in his youthful vigor free?

MIRIAM: It was the tyrant who the ruin wrought
In that fair form we shall not see again—
The tyrant who hath into bondage brought
Thy people.

(She falls upon her knees before the body and with hands upraised to heaven continues.)

Wilt thou not avenge thy slain,
Our God, whose blood cries from the ground to thee?
Alas if unto thee we cry in vain,—
We who are trodden down, oppressed, unfree,—
To help us in our weakness. Who can save,
If thou dost not, who must our evils see,

And canst strike off the fetters of the slave?
God of our fathers, save, we pray, O save!

CHORUS (all fall upon their knees and with uplifted hands):
God, unto thee, with hands uplifted, do we pray
To visit us in our affliction, and to save
From our oppressors. Oh, remember Abraham,
Our father, who, a wanderer o'er the earth became
For thy sake; and remember Joseph, whom thou madest
In Egypt's evil day a saviour from a slave;
And heed us whom the lords of Egypt so oppress,
That all our days are filled with grief and bitterness.
Remember, God, thy children murdered, tender babes,
Torn from the mother's breast and slain; and do thou take
Vengeance upon the murderers. God, we pray thee aid
Our fathers and our brothers, on whose necks is laid
The yoke of bondage till they can no more endure.
In pity help us, we beseech thee, God, with pure,
Unsullied lips. Strike off the fetters of the slave.
Remember Abraham, our God, and save, oh, save.

SCENE SECOND.—THE SAME.

MOSES, in the splendid attire of an Egyptian prince, enters soliloquizing.

MOSES: Why I have let myself be led so far
I know not; nor what may the outcome be
Of this fool's errand on which I have come;
This following of the wisp, that will belike
Mock me at last. And yet to have resisted
Would have required an exercise of will
That it were pain to have made. For days I've striven
Against the impulse—striven as with a power
That has withstood me—striven as swimmers strive
With the strong current that wears out their strength,
Until, no longer able to resist,
It bears them helpless onward. To have lived,
Opposing by the sheer might of my will
That force dead set against me, would have been
Erelong impossible. 'Twere this or death—
Death dealt perchance by my own hand. Therefore,
Whatever be the outcome of this act,
I care not. Better any fortune than
The tortures I endure. But who are these,
Who white-robed cast fresh flowers upon this bier?
And who the youth who lies so beautiful
In death, that death but seems a deeper sleep?
If I may make so bold, tell me, fair maids,
Who are you, and who he whom death has taken?

MIRIAM: Prince, behold the woful deed
Of Egypt's mighty ones; behold
Him, whom nature shaped to lead
His people, lying stark and cold;
And be thy bosom rent with grief,
And gentle pity prompt the prayer,
That He who fashioned one so fair
Give to the sorrowing heart relief.

CHORUS: Alas, our brother, fallen, fallen in thy young prime!
Why broods that awful silence o'er thee, while we mourn,

the baleful stroke that laid thee low before thy time?
Why in the freshness of thy manhood wast thou torn
From life, to wither and go down into the grave,
For vampire Death to feed upon thy lovely form,
Leaving us who have loved thee desolate? Thy arm,
That should have been our strong defence, can it not save?
Alas, alas! It lies now idle at thy side;
And the dull lid the brightness of thy eye doth hide;
And we who loved thee as the light are desolate!
We wander as in darkness and are desolate.

MIRIAM: Behold the fruit of tyrant pride,
The pomp and arrogance of power,
And if within thy bosom hide
One spark of manhood, from this hour
Resolve that for fair woman's sake,
Become the prey of greed and lust,
And manhood fettered, thou wilt make
Thy life an offering, from the dust
To raise, and bondman's chains to break.

CHORUS: Alas the sound of wailing that smites upon my ear!
The cries of those heart-broken for loved ones lost I hear.
The mother mourns her offspring torn from her throbbing breast
And into the dark jaws of death by cruel tyrants pressed.
Ah, for the thousands fallen! But there has one been saved—
Saved from the gloomy waters where the dark bulrush waved;
And, lapped in royal purple, a prince he has been bred;
Our God ordained this that he might become his people's head.
'Tis given to him the fetters to strike off from the slave;
To lift up them who're fallen, and from defeat to save;
To change our tears to gladness, to lighten our deep gloom;
To break the pitiless sway that doth to fatal bondage doom.
But ah, if he on glory and wealth have fixed his thought,
Preferring to his people's the honors of the court!
He with the bondman's stigma his father will defame;
And on his mother's forehead fix the burning brand of shame.

MOSES: I know not what your songs portend. To me
Dark is your meaning: yet my heart is thrilled
With sympathy for human sorrow I
Ne'er felt before. Meseems in him who lies,
Stretched in the cold, unbroken calm of death,
I see a brother nursed upon the breast
That nursed me, though I wear a king's device,
And he have on the laborer's attire.
And you, who are you who address me—you
Who lead this virgin choir robed in white;
Whose songs stir to the very depths my soul,
That with an impulse I can scarce resist,
I feel myself impelled to cast aside,
As a fair mockery, these princely robes
Of gold-embroidered purple, and to take
My place amongst the laborers of the earth?
Tell me, who are you: for my being throbs,
Responsive to your music, as the harp
Throbs when the master strikes it.

MIRIAM: Virgins we,
Who grieve for Israel, and pray our God,
Who bade our father Abraham depart
From Haran, to raise up a champion
With might to baffle Egypt's haughty lords,
And make our brothers, who now groan in bonds,
Free from the thralldom wherein manhood fades.
As some rare blossom to a swift decline.

MOSES: How every word you utter thrills my soul,
Like the sweet tones of music long forgotten,
That bring to consciousness a buried past
I would retrace but cannot! Speak your name.

MIRIAM: My name is Miriam; and he, who lies
Stretched here before you in the sleep of death,
Was erst my brother, whom the tyrant's hand
Struck down, because in manly guise he dared
To outface tyranny, and smite the wretch
Who would have stained my honor. But a boy
He was; but there was in him the true spark
Of manhood, that with happier auspices
Had made him one of earth's most honored sons

CHORUS: Fallen, fallen; in thy young manhood basely slain,
Thou art gone down into the dark and silent grave,
Where in the sleep of death the lord lies by the slave;
And thou wilt never walk with us in strength again.
Alas! Alas! And has thy blood been shed in vain;
Or from thy ashes will there rise up one to save,
Who will procure for us the freedom that we crave,
Breaking with God's strong help the tyrant's bonds in twain.

MOSES: Maidens, I am a prince, who may perchance
Sit on the throne of mighty Rameses;
But this I swear, so do I loath the deed
You tell me of; so sympathize with you
In your deep sorrows and your brothers' ills,
That, sooner than connive at such deep wrongs,
I would forego the royal purple; all
The emoluments and privileges of rank
And wealth; for the slave's hard condition, or
The lordly confines of some desert cave.

MIRIAM: We thank thee for thy sympathy, and feel
Drawn toward thee as to one of our own kin.
Ah, if thou wert my brother!

MOSES: Your brother!

MIRIAM: I had a brother who should be a prince:
For he was brought up as a princess' son,
Whose pity saved him from impending death.

MOSES: Where is he?

MIRIAM: That I know not: for 'tis years
Since I last saw him as a tender babe.
But hark! My brother Aaron comes with those
Who with him in the brickyards have all day
Been laboring beneath the scorching sun,
And the taskmaster's far more cruel lash.

CHORUS: Oh, that chains those limbs should fetter,
That were made to tread the earth,
As free as their's who have no better
Claim to what gives manhood worth!

Why should they all day be driven
Like dumb beasts, to whom was given
Reason, the blest light of heaven?

SCENE THIRD.—THE SAME.

With AARON and CHORUS OF YOUTHS, in the garb of the laborer, with picks and shovels, and with chains upon the ankles. Moses in the centre background. The chorus of youths arrange themselves on one side of the stage and the chorus of maidens on the other.

AARON: The weary day is done, and we are free
To find in the forgetfulness of sleep
Cessation from our ills; a few short hours,
Until at the first springing of the dawn
We must be at our tasks, for our stern lords
To spend our strength until we can no more.
But first we'll pay our tribute of respect
To our poor brother, torn from life's green bough
Long ere the time; but happier far in this
Than we, who still must bend beneath the yoke.

CHORUS OF YOUTHS:
O gentle Sleep, as thy twin sister Death,
Thou layest thy hand upon our fevered brows,
And we become unconscious of our woes,
In thy sweet presence. Brother, thy hard breath
In bondage thou wilt have to draw no more;
For thou to thy eternal rest hast gone.
To the harsh discipline of life no dawn
Will waken thee, as us when night is o'er.
And yet we grieve for thee,
The dear companion of our weary days,
Who walked amongst us with a step as free
As doth the lion in the forest maze.
Thou wast no child of earth,
Though our companion, but of heavenly birth.

AARON: Sister, who is this stranger in the garb
Of Pharaoh's minions? Wherefore does he stand
Amongst us in this sadly solemn hour,
To gaze upon our rites with alien eyes?

MOSES (stepping forward):
I'll answer for myself. I cannot tell
Why I am here, but that an impulse drew—
An impulse too imperious to resist—
That as one in a charmed sleep my feet
Brought me unweeting hither.

AARON: Do not mock
Our sorrow, stranger, with unmeaning words.

MOSES: Far be't from me to speak unmeaning words
In death's stern presence. What I said is truth:
Nor do I know how better to express
My actions; for mysteriously I have
Been guided; have, against my will and judgment,
Been overruled as by a stronger will.
Brother,—if I may call thee so; for here
I feel myself no alien,—let me stay
And share in your solemnities. (He holds out his hand.)

AARON: Brother!
Who in the garb of an Egyptian prince
Dare take upon his perjured lips that name,
Pregnant with all the sacred memories
Of childhood and a common heritage?
MOSES: If this dress be what have offended you,
I will remove it, and in kindred garb
Beside you cast my tribute on his bier;
And bear with my own hands, if you permit,
His dust to its last resting place with you.
AARON: 'Tis not the dress of purple and of gold
That like the hated basilisk offends;
But the Egyptian blood within your veins.
Hence! Do not touch with alien hands his form,
Which an Egyptian ruined.
MOSES: If one ruined,
May not another mourn at least the deed?
AARON: Can an Egyptian prince feel for our ills?
MIRIAM: Brother, you do not well so to repulse
One who holds out the hand of fellowship.
Accept it in the spirit it was given.
AARON: Who knows what spirit prompted it? Belike
He comes to spy upon our acts, or mock
The misery proud Egypt's lords have caused.
MOSES: Hear me. I should despise myself could I
Be guilty of the purpose you surmise.
That I am not your brother, as you think
Of brotherhood—a scion of your race—
Does not forbid that I should feel with you
In your affliction. And to speak the truth,
Methinks my heart could not more strongly throb,
Responsive to your feelings, if I were
A Hebrew, as I am an Egyptian prince.
In sooth—I know not why it should be so,
But that it is so is indubitable—
That never since I came to conscious life
Have I been stirred so to my being's depths
By kindred spirits as I have been here.
I have been prompted more than once to kneel,
Before you all, beside this hallowed dust,
And press my lips to his cold lips as to
A brother's. Every word of Miriam
Has made my heart leap toward her; and to you,
It was an impulse prompted not by form
Or heartless courtesy, to reach the hand.
Let me, then, be your brother for nonce,
And mingle my warm human tears with yours.
CHORUS OF YOUTHS AND MAIDENS:
How sweet the gentle tie of brotherhood,
That binds us to a kindred life and good!
To share one common lot, one common destiny;
United in our joy and in our grief to be!
How sweet to feel that one is not alone
When the harsh hand of fate weighs heavily;
That in the hour of evil there is nigh
Some cherished one
To lessen ill with human sympathy!
In weakness there is strength for them who stand

United heart with heart and hand with hand.
The ills are lightened that our fellows bear;
The joys are richer that with them we share.

HALF CHORUS OF YOUTHS:

Though hard one's toil, and weary hours
He spend beneath the scorching sun;
And though grim death before him lowers;
To have at hand the cherished one,
With whom, although so sorely driven,
To hold sweet converse it is given,
As they who walk the streets of heaven,
Makes life more fair, as earth some delicate blossom,
Or the dark cloud the rainbow on its bosom.

HALF CHORUS OF MAIDENS:

Gentle love, how radiant thou art!
A many-tinted iris of the heart:
A glory, heaven-begotten, born
Upon the bosom of the soul's unrest,
As from the womb of night the morn,
Or as the babe upon its mother's breast.
Heed, heed the promptings of the heart, which speak,
Though heavy-footed reason hold aloof.
Not with the leaden wings of flawless proof
We reach the lofty goal our spirits seek.

MOSES: I would be as your brother; I would take
If it might be the place of him who's gone.
But if my presence give offense, since fate
Ordained me in a palace to be born,
And reared as one of Egypt's princes, while
No more unworthy ye were to the life
Of toil begotten, I will take myself
Elsewhere, that, troubled by no alien presence,
Ye may perform his obsequies, whose death,
Did I obey the promptings of my heart,
I would deplore with you. (He holds out his hand.)

AARON: Not in that garb,
Wherein so lives before me Egypt's pride,
Whose baleful venom robbed me of a brother,
That seeing it I could not hold in check
My anger ready to burst into flame.

MOSES: These robes that so offend you I will change,
Revealing to you in my like attire
My kindred heart, that, keyed to unison
With yours, will beat accordant with your grief.
I leave you for a while, and will return,
If this be not repugnant to you, clad,
No longer in the glittering robes of state,
But in the laborer's humbler garb ye wear.

MIRIAM: Return. We will not hold ourselves aloof.
From one who of true sympathy gives proof.
Perchance beneath an alien garb may burn
A brother's heart that feels with us.

AARON: Return.

(Moses goes out.)

SCENE FOURTH.—MIRIAM, AARON and the CHORUS.

AARON: Sister, I am surprised that you have shown

Such favor to a stranger; have received
In friendly converse one we know naught of,
But that with fair professions and fond speech
He thrusts himself amongst us quite unasked.
MIRIAM: I am scarce less surprised that you reveal
Such acrimony. I could not refuse
The proffered courtesy of one whose words
Thrilled me as words have seldom thrilled before.
AARON: Your heart will make a fool of you belike.
MIRIAM: Methinks the heart would be a surer guide
More often than cold reason.
AARON: Such a guide
As the mirage, which in the desert leads
The thirsty traveler a weary jaunt,
To leave him in the utmost straits at last
With nothing but the burning sands around.
MIRIAM: But what if it should prove the gentle prince,
For all his alien garb which so offends
Your Jewish sense, were our own brother?
AARON: Eh!
Is it in that direction that your thought
Pursues him?
MIRIAM: Wherefore not? We have a brother,
Or should have, in the court of Pharaoh bred;
Who, if not recreant to his Jewish blood,
Should in this presence feel some kindred thrill,
Prophetic of his birth and destiny.
AARON: It is a too fond fancy, that I fear
Has but small chance of confirmation.
MIRIAM: Why
Not fondle this sweet thought until events
Prove it fallacious or confirm?
AARON: Why not
Surrender up oneself to every dream
That pleases the fond fancy, reason-blind,
Foregoing hold upon reality?
MIRIAM: Such hopes may not be cloud-towers, having not
A basis on the solid ground of fact.
AARON: And they may be.
MIRIAM: When there's an equal chance
That our most flattering hopes may not be false,
And when in confirmation the fond heart
Proclaims them true, why not accept its voice,
Though laggard reason bring objections forth,
To conquer faith with its obnoxious brood,
Begotten of hesitancy and ill-will?
AARON: How ready women are to be deceived,
So the deceiver wear the gracious garb
Of courtly manners and obsequious speech!
MIRIAM: Must one forever wear the gloomy veil
Suspicion dictates, and with earth-bent eye
Demurely walk, lest on the golden wings
Of fancy soaring heavenward he fall?
But truly, brother, it appears no stretch
Of fond imagination, to conceive
That he who for the sorrow that he feels
For our dear loss, and hatred of the act
That robbed us of our fair young brother, our

Lost brother may be—lost in infancy
To us in the strange world of Pharaoh's court.

AARON: I will believe when certain proof declare
This is so and cannot be otherwise.
Sister, till then I hold the prince, although he come
Stripped of his gay apparel in our somb'rer robes
Of service, an Egyptian, not to be received
But with suspicion, till he shall have proved nimself
Worthy our confidence. But let us not contend
In words around our brother's still unburied dust.

CHORUS: Alas that they who sit in royal state
From them who in the garb of service wait,
Should hold themselves aloof, as from an alien race,
And in the scale of manhood should strive more to abase!
In form are we not all of kindred stock?
As statues chiselled from the self-same block?
The prince and slave have issued from one womb,
And life's short fever o'er,
Both must go down into the silent tomb,
And here be known no more.
Naked we came into the world each one,
And naked must go hence when life is done.

HALF CHORUS OF YOUTHS:
Are we not men, though destined to a life
Of toil, as they in courtly circles bred?
We have the passions that in them are rife,
And crave on truth and beauty to be fed.
But we are scorned and flouted by the proud,
Who differ from us but in what they have.
A man's a man although he be a slave,
Prophetic nature cries in accents loud.

HALF CHORUS OF MAIDENS:
However men deny, the stamp of race
Proclaims the slave and courtier of one blood.
Though beautiful or marred appear the face,
Like features show essential brotherhood.
Alas that paltry differences of state
Should make them aliens in one womb conceived!
When shall the slave from fetters be relieved,
The courtier from his pride, and all from hate?

SCENE FIFTH.—THE SAME, JOCHEBED and MOSES, the latter in the dress of the Hebrew youths.

JOCHEBED: What means the sound of faction I have heard,
Where all should be in brotherly accord?
(She looks to Miriam and Aaron, but receives no answer.)
Does no one answer? Will no voice reply?
Why stand you with flushed cheek and down-bent eye?

A MAIDEN (sings):
One hither came in princely guise,
In purple clad and burning gold.
A maiden's heart could not be cold,
Beholding such a form, and eyes
So lustrous that were scarce more bright
The sun's when putting sombre night
And all his gruesome shades to flight.

A YOUTH (sings):
Not in purple and in gold
Did he more manly to our eyes
Appear than in the lowly guise
That he has taken. We behold
One kinglier as we see him now,
With coarse attire and naked brow,
Than when he sought in raiment bright
To dazzle like the orb of light.
MIRIAM: Mother, the young man who has come with you
Was here erewhile in gold-embroidered robes;
And though a prince of Egypt's royal blood,
As his attire bespoke him, the true heart
Of manhood in him beat in unison
With us in our affliction, that he wept
Tears over our poor brother basely slain.
AARON: Yea, an Egyptian royally attired
Came hither, and although with glozing speech
He spoke us fair, and as of kindred blood
Would have bewailed with us our brother slain,
The vision of his glory venomed sight,
As of the basilisk whose look is fatal.
MOSES (stepping forward):
Therefore as hateful he has laid aside
Those basilisk robes, and stands before you clad
In no more rich apparel than your own,
That he may prove, if kindred dress can prove,
That not in specious words of sweet accord
He spoke of feeling as a brother feels
Toward a brother; but in very truth
Declared the yearning that within his breast
Was struggling for expression. Will you not
Accept this token of sincerity,
And take the hand that honestly is given?
HALF CHORUS OF YOUTHS:
Men will not refuse the hand
Of one who can thrust rank aside,
With them a brother so to stand;
Feeling no treachery can hide
Within his bosom who will tear
Away the masks, and lay all bare
His heart, for the sharp, searching light of day
Down into its most deep recess to stray.
(Aaron takes Moses' hand, but with signs of repugnance.)
HALF CHORUS OF MAIDENS:
Sweet it is when hand in hand
Men united, as one band
Of brothers stand, of brothers stand.
Heaven-begotten are the ties
That heart with heart accordant bind,
Whence men can act without disguise,
All of one mind, all of one mind.
JOCHEBED: Heaven-begotten they are indeed, my daughters,
And in a deeper sense than ye surmise:
For he who now holds Aaron by the hand
Is not of alien blood, howe'er his dress
When he came hither seemed to speak him so.
He is a son of Israel no less

Than these whose kindred garb he has assumed;
No less than Aaron; for from the same womb
He issued; from the same that gave him birth
Who lies now still upon the hard, cold earth.

MIRIAM: O my prophetic spirit! In my heart
A thrill when first I saw him seemed to say,
This is thy brother; he whom God did part
From thee and his in Israel's evil day;
In the long death of years to live estranged,
Till time should give him back the same though changed.

JOCHEBED: One son is taken, and one from the dead
Come back in princely guise to take the place
He has left vacant. Moses is indeed
Your brother, Aaron, in the palace bred,
Although of Israel's down-trodden race.

MOSES: My brother I can call thee without fear
Or contradiction, brother, now 'tis proved
Thou art such; yet the heart had said as much,
Ere laggard proof confirmed its budding faith.

AARON: Brother, I scarcely yet can reconcile
Belief with fact—my brother—yes, my heart
Spoke, too; but I suppressed its promptings, blind
With prejudice and envy of the guise
In which you came, of an Egyptian lord,—
Of one of those who struck our brother down.
But why did you not tell me in plain terms
You were my brother?

MOSES: Since I knew it not.

AARON: You knew not?

MOSES: No, I only learned the truth
But now,—learned from our mother, whom I met
On leaving you to change my princely garb
For this I wear.

AARON: Tell me how meeting grew
To recognition.

MOSES: Ask our mother that.

JOCHEBED: As I came hither in my mourning robes,
To take a last look at my darling boy,
Ere we should lay away his precious dust
Within the cold, dank earth, I met your brother,—
Met, and was astonished to behold
An Egyptian as he seemed to my bleared sight;
And my heart, apprehensive of more ill,
Throbbed violently. Then I recalled a dream,
In which methought I saw a flame arise
Out of the bosom of our dear one slain,
And taking form and substance a strong youth,
Clad in the rich apparel of a prince
Of Egypt there appeared before me. Features
And form I marked distinctly, and not less
Each striking characteristic of his dress;
And all I saw repeated in the youth
Who suddenly appeared to me in truth.
Suspicion then to firm conviction grew,
That he who came so heralded could be
No other than my son long lost to me,
And questioning proved my surmises true.

CHORUS: Out of death new life arises:
Nothing dies, but suffers change.
Spirit constantly surprises
Us in aspects rare and strange.
We lay the mould within the teeming earth,
And marvellous flowers are quickened into birth;
A lovely progeny from the prolific womb
Of ever-fruitful nature. From the silent tomb,
Wherein our hopes are buried, will arise
What flowers to blossom beneath fairer skies!

MOSES (kneeling before the body):
Gentle one, so foully brought to death,
I vow, that if God give to me the strength,
I will avenge thee. May thy spirit breathe
In me, who to my heritage at length
Have come; the heirship of my people's woes.
I have been educated by their foes,
That to a better future I may lead,
If not amiss life's riddle do I read.

CHORUS: Hope rises up within our hearts anew,
Like flowers jewelled with the morning dew.
A man has fallen and a man has come,
Forth like the sun when from the sombre womb
Of night he issues, with resplendent face,
To fill the earth with loveliness and grace.

HALF CHORUS OF MAIDENS:
O thou wast beautiful, whose form we lay
Within the sunless earth, in the cold dust away.
Thou wast the dawn, whose early coming told,
That night, decrepit grown and old,
Would soon be thrust from his usurping sway
By younger day.
The star of morning wast thou in our sight,
That shines resplendent on the brow of night,
The radiant herald of the brighter reign,
Will ease us of our sorrow and our pain.

HALF CHORUS OF YOUTHS:
Gentle youth, we bear thee sadly hence,
To lay thy body in the cold, dank soil.
No more the sweet companion of our toil,
Wilt thou wise counsel and good cheer dispense.
But thou has left an heir, who as the flame
From thy pure spirit, will in princely guise
Soar to the zenith skies,
Triumphant o'er the murderer's fallen fame.

(Miriam kneels at the head and Aaron at the feet of the dead youth; Moses remains kneeling beside and behind the bier. Jochebed stands over them, with eyes uplifted to heaven and with hands spread out over her children.)

JOCHEBED: For Israel's sake, my children, may ye live
United, working in accord to free!
Pledge yourselves here all your best powers to give,
That from her limbs the chains may stricken be.
Die if you must, but dying, die to save
Your people from the powers that would enslave.

CHORUS: God of our fathers, hear the prayer we raise
To thee, who guided them through all their days,
To guide thy servants now, and to release

From bondage those who're driven without surcease,
To toil for cruel lords, who think of naught but gain,
And fill their waking hours with bitterness and pain.

(Curtain falls.)

ACT THIRD.

Audience room in the palace of Pharaoh. The first scenes in the antechamber, separated from the main room by heavy curtains, which are afterward drawn aside.

SCENE FIRST.—MOSES and PENTAUR.

PENTAUR: My good companion of my student days,
With whom I have had many a friendly joust
In logic and at making of quaint verse,
I am right glad to see thee. I have pined
To have sweet converse with thee as I used.
How have you been employed these many weeks?
Brooding quaint fancies into studious rhyme?
MOSES: No, Pentaur, I have taken of late disgust
At such mere dilettante tasks as these.
PENTAUR: Then have I lost the critic of my verse
The most discerning.
MOSES: Possibly to find
A more exacting critic. There is naught
Of immortality in polished rhymes
And quaint conceits. When in majestic verse
The mighty throbbings of a nation's heart
Are heard, the poet's airy words are more
Than brass and sculptured stone enduring; more
Than all the praises of a clique, his is
The sincere homage of a people's love.
PENTAUR: Your words remind me of the high ideal
To which I have aspired. In mighty verse
I would sing Egypt's glory.
MOSES: Can you that
You will do valiantly. But much I fear
That Egypt has already passed her prime,
And entering on evil days at hand
Cannot sustain the poet of your dreams.
PENTAUR: I trust it be not so. 'Tis hard to think
Of long-victorious Egypt in decline.
But whence do you prognosticate so dark
A future?
MOSES: 'Tis of sinister import,
That for the patriotism which opposed
The foreign kings, who long had held in awe
The nation conquered and disorganized,
Both in the state and court rank factions breed;
And blind ambition to mere selfish ends
Our dearest interests sacrifices, while,
Beneath the foot of pompous tyranny,
Groan in their agony crushed millions. These
Are the portentous symptoms of disease,
That will breed schism if not quickly healed,
And schism civil warfare and defeat.

PENTAUR: I fear your diagnosis is too true
A statement of the evils that afflict
The land. And yet I trust the malady
Is not incurable.
MOSES: So did I long,
And fancied it were in my power to heal;
But I have come to think of my poor skill
More soberly, and have convinced myself
The most heroic treatment is required
To stop the disease.
PENTAUR: And who than you more fit
To make the prescription?
MOSES: Nay, that cannot be.
The mere suggestion of my purpose would
Awake the bitterest antagonism.
I would be forced at one stroke to o'erturn
The policy pursued by Rameses,
Which so accrues in profit to the lords,
That one and all are pledged to its support,
That to uphold it they would wreck the state.
PENTAUR: I do not grasp your meaning.
MOSES: Well, in short,
The Israelites must be no more enslaved,
But given as men an equal chance to win
The highest goal of their ambition. Aye,
I see you go not with me. Yea, my friend,—
If ever I have spoken the truth, 'tis now,—
This is the remedy that will avail,
And this alone, that Egypt's ancient stock
And Israel must be welded into one,
Becoming one united people; or
The cleavage will to separation grow,
And in the birth-throe of an alien state
Egypt will cruelly be torn and gashed.
PENTAUR: But can you not do aught to prevent the schism?
MOSES: It is and is not possible. In me,
And me alone, the stock of Israel
And Egypt's culture are united. Could
I be received as king, within myself
Uniting all the forces in the state,
As in my person the two peoples meet,
'Twere in my power to stay the malady,
And Egypt to a higher pitch of glory
To lead than she has ever yet attained.
But it is vain to think of this. Would I
The factious policy of Menephthah
Pursue, I could defeat his arts, and place
Upon my brows the crown of Rameses.
But that would be to seek a lower than
The kingship to which I have been ordained.
No, Egypt does not want a king who would
Be king of all her people—of the slave
As of the lord—but a mere party chief,
Whose factions followers can have their will;
And so will I be thrust out from the throne,
Damned by the one fact I will not conceal,
That I'm a son of oppressed Israel.

PRINCESS: What did I hear? A son of Israel?
How came you by that knowledge, I have kept
A hidden mystery from you all these years?
MOSES: I have been drawn inexplicably of late
Toward the Israelites, whose cruel lot
Awoke a kindred pity in my breast,
Though I knew not they were my brothers.
PRINCESS: How
Found you that out?
MOSES: I chanced upon a scene
That well might move the most obdurate pride.
A tender youth was stretched out cold in death,
Slain by the vile assassin's venomed steel;
And as I mingled with the weeping train,
I struggled with the thought that would intrude
Upon my mind, that he was of my kin;
And as it proved, prophetic was the thrill
That stirred me, since he was my brother.
PRINCESS: Yet
You have not told me how you learned this fact.
MOSES: I learned it from the wife of Amram, she
Who gave me birth; and learned therewith her arts
To save me, threatened with impending death;
And how I came to be brought up by you,
My foster-mother, as an Egyptian prince.
PRINCESS: Well, you have found out what I would have hidden
For your own peace of mind, the mystery
Of your existence,—hidden that you might deem
Yourself a prince of Egypt, and might act
With no obtrusive consciousness of self
Strongly the part.
MOSES: Perhaps you had done better
To have informed me; for the mystery
Was a disturbing feature in my life,
Ere I had learned the secret of my birth.
PRINCESS: For good or ill the mischief has been done,
Which I would have undone if possible;
For I foresee the knowledge will affect
Your attitude toward all existing facts.
MOSES: It cannot but do so; but yet, my mother,
(For you are such as she who gave me birth)
I am no less an Egyptian that I am
An Israelite.
PRINCESS: I would you were all mine,
And Egypt's, as before this grievous news,—
Grievous to me, who're jealous of your fame,—
Came to disturb the vigor of your life
By giving it an alien purpose,—came,
With its abasing tendency, to make
You less the man than I would have you.
MOSES: Less
Than manly is it to acknowledge brotherhood
With them of harder fortune, but of kindred blood?
If to have thrust aside life's pomp and pageantry
Be baseness, base perchance I may be forced to be.
But if to do a deed unworthy make one base,
Be sure I will not bring a blush upon your face.

PRINCESS: Ah, Moses, I would have you sit upon the throne
Of Rameses, whose term of life is nearly done.
For you to be less than the king of Egypt were
To fall short of the honor you might hope to bear.
But if you will proclaim yourself an Israelite,
I fear another will deprive you of your right.

MOSES: If as an Israelite I can be king, to do
All justice, and to follow the course I deem is true,
I will be king, and none shall take from me the place;
But never if to be such I must deny my race.

(A flourish of trumpets is heard, and a herald passes across the stage.)

HERALD: Great Rameses comes hither—may he live forever!—
The mighty king of Egypt, who has more advanced
The nation's fame and glory than any king before.
Prepare, all ye who hear, to give him fitting welcome. (Exit.)

PENTAUR: We can no more converse; for presently the king
Seated will be upon his throne in royal state,
And gracious audience will give to all his lords.
These curtains will be drawn aside, and we will stand
With others in the dazzling presence of the king.

PRINCESS: It is no secret that the aged king today
Will give a hearing to all rival claims, and choice
Will make of one to wear the crown when he is gone.
And O, my son—or must I call thee so no more,
Though I have loved thee as a son and still so love—
I would that choice might light on thee, whom I believe
(And it is not my fondness now that speaks, but firm
Conviction and clear reason) worthiest of all
Competitors between whom choice must make decision.

(The curtains are drawn aside, revealing Rameses crowned and seated upon his throne, and lords and courtiers taking their places at either side.)

SCENE THIRD.

RAMESES: Listen, my lords and courtiers all, who lustre take
From royalty's bright presence, as the sovereign sun
Makes all the clouds resplendent. We have called you here
For conference upon a most momentous act,
The choice of one who shall inherit after us
The dignities that we must presently lay down.
But first let me refresh your memories, bringing up
Before you facts, which hardly one in presence now
Has personal knowledge of; but I, whose memory
Can span three-quarters of a century, recall.
'Tis sixty years since, in my father Seti's days,
The royalties fell to me, that I must transmit
Now to another; and ye all will bear me witness,
That not obscured in lustre I will pass them on
To him who shall succeed me. I have raised the fame
Of Egypt, that no mightier state in all the earth
Exists, and have with splendid works adorned the land.
I hardly need remind you of my victories,
The fame whereof lives on all lips; my victories
O'er many peoples gained and in far distant lands.
First, a mere stripling, while my father Seti still
Held equal sway with me in Thebes, in the far south,

O'er the black Ethiop I won, that he ne'er dared
Again to lift up his rebellious head. Ere long
In Canaan with the contumacious Hittite state,
That has so often put to the test the Egyptian strength,
I battled, and victorious returned to Thebes,
Bringing rich booty and innumerable slaves.
Against these foes, that conquered with recovered power
Resume the conflict, I have led campaigns a score,
And never have returned home worsted; and at last,
Methinks I have so shattered them they will no more
Spring up to trouble us. Even to the far Euphrates
My conquering arms I have extended, and have made
Stout Babylon pay tribute. In the distant north
I have won victories o'er the fair-haired men, who dwell
On sea-engirdled isles and wave-washed shores, and looked
Upon the Argive king who from Mycaenae rules them.

PENTAUR (sings):

With our sincere regard we honor thee, great king,
Whose lustrous deeds inspire the patriot heart to sing
Thy praises in majestic verse. Thy peerless might
Has made thee like a god, invincible in fight.
Upon thy arms has fickle victory ever smiled,
Whether in Babylon or Greece the many-isled,
For Egypt thou hast fought, or led thy armies forth
To battle in the burning south or colder north.
Thy conquering sword like lightning has flashed when thou hast drawn;
The foes that have assailed thee, like night before the dawn
Have vanished, or as clouds before the radiant sun;
And thou no less in splendor than his thy course hast run.

RAMESES: Now to the purpose. In the course of nature we
Cannot expect to hold a much extended lease
Of life, and our enfeebled strength reminds the weight
Of kinghood should upon a younger frame be laid.
But whose? Upon this question hangs the fate of Egypt.
The choice we make decides for better or for worse
Her fortunes, whether to a height yet unattained
She shall go on ascending, or from now decline
Into an ever-lessening place amongst the nations.
Speak, my lords and courtiers. What have ye to say
Of weight or reason to decide us in this choice?
And first to thee, most worthy priest, do we address
Ourself. In freedom give your counsel.

SETI: August king,
Methinks your wisdom has divined already whom
I would see wear your crown and sway the sceptre you
So long have swayed for Egypt's honor. Nor alone
Am I in deeming him the worthiest, whose name
I put in nomination,—Moses, who has shown
The mind to comprehend the weightiest arguments,
And more than any other (in this I speak my deep
Conviction) has imbibed, and made it his possession,
All the rich culture Egypt has in centuries
Accumulated, making her in more than might
Of arms the foremost of the nations of the earth.
This is no paltry commendation, and to this
There must be added, that he is no mere recluse,
Who knows no fellowship but books, but one whom life

Has had its charms for; one above all who has laid
The potent spell of his strong personality,
Although so young, on others.
MENEPHTHAH: Permit me, gracious king,
Whose long and glorious reign has rendered Egypt great,
To make an earnest protest against the choice of Moses.
Great Rameses should be succeeded by a man,
Who will pursue the policy that has accrued
In so great gain for Egypt; who will carry out
As Rameses' own self the projects you have started,
And on the lines you have laid down conduct the state;
Not one who has in open and unmeasured terms
Condemned, and uttered threats, if he should reach the throne
Completely to reverse the policy you have
Pursued with such success.
RAMESES: If this be true 'twill bar
Inevitably the choice of Moses; for I wish
To seat no revolutionist upon my throne,
With rash hand to undo all I have done for Egypt.
Tell me, Moses, what were your purpose should the crown
Be placed upon your head and sceptre in your hand.
MOSES: Illustrious king, to give my life for Egypt, that
If possible she might become a nobler state
Than you have left her.
RAMESES: Well, this sounds assuredly.
I find no tang of revolution in these words.
MENEPHTHAH: Fair speeches easily are coined when kings require.
MOSES: Sire, in my heart I have no other wish for Egypt
Than to behold her magnified.
MENEPHTHAH: Would you not see
The nobles lowered, and slaves of alien race exalted?
MOSES: I would see equal justice done to all,—to slaves
Not less than those who can trace back their pedigree,
Beyond the times when alien kings oppressed the land,
To those when primal Menes and lordly Cheops reared
The pyramids.
MENEPHTHAH: Fair sounding words; but in plain parlance,
They mean, believe me, mighty Rameses, injustice
To those you have been pleased to honor,—to the men
Of pure Egyptian blood, who under you have done
The doughty deeds that have established Egypt's fame.
RAMESES: Most worthy priest, help disentangle this dispute.
SETI: Sire, Moses, if I understand his attitude,
Feels, as do others, that the warlike policy
So long pursued, however justifiable,
Cannot without exhaustion be continually
Pursued; and, therefore, do the nobles, who have thriven
In war to an unconscionable extent, and would
In peace sink back within more reasonable bounds,
Decry his exaltation to the throne, denouncing
The loss of prestige likely to accrue to them,
As Egypt's, not their own.
MENEPHTHAH: Sire, would you wish to see
The arms rust on the walls, that under your command
Have flashed upon all peoples Egypt's mightier manhood?
Nay, I know you would not,—know you would regret
As lamentable weakness, immeasurable decline,

A policy averse to war, which you've pursued
So vigorously, and have so well provided for
In arsenals and muniments and granaries,
Which hordes of slaves—the Israelites and those you've brought
From north, south, east and west—have labored to procure you.
RAMESES: Truly I have not stinted warlike preparations,
For I have felt that Egypt must assert herself,
Or have the ability to do so, if she hold
The primacy amongst the nations.
MOSES: Sire, you look
For me to justify myself and my intents.
'Tis true, as the good father here has said, I feel
Without exhaustion Egypt cannot further spend
Her strength in distant conquests and uncertain war,
Wherein she's done enough to make her might apparent;
Nor is the glory of a nation but in arms.
Methinks you will be more remembered in the times
To come for all the noble works you have achieved
In art, than victories the fame of which will die
Upon the lips of your coevals, or will live
But in vague rumor. Nor have I been blind to the fact,
That 'tis this policy has hardened so the hearts
Of Egypt's lords against the Israelites, who stood
For Egypt loyally when battling for her life,
And could have been indissolubly bound to the fate
Of Egypt, but have been so alienated by
Maltreatment that betwixt them and more courtly Egypt
Schism grows, of sinister import, that may
Disrupt the state.
MENEPHTHAH: You with your own ears, Rameses,
Have heard him pass upon your policy harsh judgment,
Daring to plead for Israelites you have enslaved.
MOSES: I do plead for them, most illustrious king, feeling
In my heart pity; and I plead for Egypt, pleading
For those who should as sons be treated, but are treated
As beasts; for weaker is the state where any man
Cannot assert his manhood; strongest that where most
Completely each can realize the best that's in him.
RAMESES: 'Tis as I feared: you are a theorist, than whom
There is no helmsman less reliable to rule
A state. 'Tis well enough to dream of equal rights:
But facts are facts, and slaves must by the lash be driven,
While those of nobler instincts rule as they were born to.
And now what were your policy, if unto you
The crown were given, Menephthah?
MENEPHTHAH: Illustrious king,
You have in few words voiced my feelings. Were I king
I would even to the last iota follow out
your policy,—would open wide the door to merit,
And with the whip would hold the mass in wholesome fear,
And so get out of them—I thank the good prince for
The word—all that is in them.
PENTAUR: Within the humblest bosom
A life there is may burst forth into wondrous blossom.
The heart that now lies barren as the desert's waste
Will teem with beauty if the waters it but taste.
As Egypt from the sands where flows the unfailing Nile.
The spirit quickened will from sterile nature smile.
The Sphynx, that wondrous form half bestial and half human,

Not in mere stone we meet, but in each man and woman.
It is the immortal spirit from the enswathing power
Of nature breaking here first into marvellous flower.
Fear will not bring it forth; the lash cannot reveal
The hidden mystery each bosom doth conceal.

MOSES: Illustrious king, the poet's song has uttered truth.
The servile labor you can get from maid or youth
Beneath the driver's lash is not the mystery
Would burst forth into marvellous beauty were they free.
Give culture to the people, and the mind and heart
Will have expression in fair life and noble art.
The nation has not reached the acme of her fame
Till every soul can realize its highest aim.

RAMESES: And do you tell me, Moses, that the bestial herd
Of coarse-grained men and women are capable of more
Than the slave's work we give them; that the Israelites
If given culture might of Egypt's ancient stock
Become the peers?

MOSES: Why not?

RAMESES: Where have you proof of this?

MOSES: Sire, I will answer by a tale. A mother once,
An Israelitish mother, gave birth to a boy,
Whose life was threatened; wherefore to defend her child,
She made an ark of bulrushes besmeared with pitch,
And laid it with the child upon the river's brink;
And there a princess found who thither came to bathe.
And pitying took, and as her own brought up the babe,
He grew to manhood and in every art was trained,
And disciplined in mind and body people felt,
That he who else unlettered had grown up a slave,
Lacked not the qualities that fitted him to reign.

MENEPHTHAH: Great king, since he has mentioned with no blush of shame
His humble origin, what need I to say more?
Is he who boasts an Israelitish mother bore
The man whom Pharaoh should appoint to uphold his fame?

MOSES: Once more, great Pharaoh, hear me. If in Egypt's king
All that today is Egypt should be found, I am,
In virtue of my birth and all-controlling fate,
Ordained her king; for in me all the lines have met
That are when gathered in one nexus Egypt. Birth
Has made akin to Egypt's toiling millions,—slaves
I am aware we call them, yet Egyptians, if
Not only those who rule are Egypt; and I have
That culture which alone has rendered Egypt great;
Without which none were different from our grossest slaves,
Or him who roves in untamed savagery the waste.
I am an Egyptian of the Egyptians, Rameses,
In this, as in my native stock an Israelite.

RAMESES: Moses, that bar sinister had not condemned,
Had you as others been oblivious thereof.
But since you boast your humble birth, hence, to your own!
The foundling of a slave sits not upon my throne.

MOSES: I bow before the will of mighty Rameses.

RAMESES: Prince Menephthah, your arm; for faintness doth me seize.
My lords and counsellors, I now dissolve this court.
I fear the time remaining for me to reign is short.

THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY: Live, mighty king, forever! Long live great Rameses!

(Pharaoh retires, leaning on the arm of Menephthah. All follow but Moses and Seti.)

SCENE FOURTH.—MOSES and SETI.

SETI: My son, the choice of Rameses is clear.
Prince Menephthah will be our future king;
And you, who should have been such, will be driven
To alienate yourself from us; to live
An outcast from the light of Egypt's court,
With slaves for your companions; or to dwell
An exile amongst strangers, distant far
From our clear culture, in the outer world
Of formless savagery, in which dark chaos
A lovely world of order Egypt stands,
Sprung from the illimitable increate,
As her fair country from the desert's sands.

MOSES: I know not what the future have in store;
But trust that I may have the strength to meet
Whatever fortune come.

SETI: Yet I deplore
The fortune that has robbed you of the crown,
Which was your due.

MOSES: I waste no vain regrets
For what I well foresaw could not be mine,
Save at a price I could not pay.

SETI: Alas,
That you had not kept silent on that fact,
Which had not damned you but from your own lips!

MOSES: Would you have had me, to have won the crown
Of Rameses, deny my manhood?

SETI: Nay,
My son; but hardly can I deem it this
To have made no boast of Israelitish birth.

MOSES: I boasted not—I would much rather boast
Of my Egyptian culture—but the fact
Untold of my discovered parentage
Would have made all my life a lie.

SETI: A lie!
I do not understand your casuistry.

MOSES: Were I not less than man to have forsworn
For Egypt's culture and her crown my nature?
I would have made my culture but a show,
And kinghood but the glittering robes of state;
While in my heart I would have been a slave
And savage.

SETI: It would seem all must be such
From your description; all are to be damned,
If such a conflict 'twixt the essential life
And outward state be damnable.

MOSES: I am
No casuist to say this must be so;
But just a stern logician, who would prove
His logic on himself. I can but feel
A mockery that culture which is not
An expression of the life; and, feeling this,

Of Egypt—that is of mere courtly Egypt—
I could not have been king without denying
My nature, which in bondage groans with those
Who gave me birth and are my kindred. I
Were criminal indeed could I for culture—
The polish of the court and elegancies
Of dress and speech, and to delight in beauty—
Leave bond my father, and the brand of shame
Stamp on my mother's forehead. While they suffer
I must forego the sweet delights of life,
Till they can share them with me.

SETI: As the king
Of Egypt could you not have served them better
Than as the suffering fellow of their lot?

MOSES: Listen! I found myself by accident—
Or shall I say mysterious destiny?—
Erewhile the witness of a piteous scene.
Slain by the foul assassin's hand, a youth
Lay beautiful in death; and on his bier
Sweet maidens cast fair flowers, and as they sang
His requiem their kindred stood around
In slave's apparel. Deeply was my heart
Affected at the grievous sight; and more
When I had learned, as speedily I did,
That that fair boy so basely brought to death
Was my own brother.

SETI: Pitiful indeed!

MOSES: Ay, it was pitiful, and made me hate
The selfish culture that on manhod preys,
And rears its ghastly structure on the graves
Of slaughtered millions.

SETI: Not thus criminal
Is all our culture.

MOSES: All is criminal
Upon the sacrifice of manhood founded.

SETI: Then criminal the pomp and pageantry
And power founded on the force of arms,
That are today the boast of Egypt.

MOSES: Father,
The power that murders manhood is enthroned
Within the heart of Egypt, wherefore Egypt could
Not brook my kingship. This or me 'twere forced
To ostracize; and Egypt has decided.

SETI: I fear that her decision is portentous.
But hark! what is that sound that smites upon my ear?
Methinks that wailing mingled with plaudits do I hear.

(A herald passes across the stage.)

HERALD: Great Rameses, the sunlike ruler of the land
Is dead, and Menephthah now sits upon his throne,
And sways the sceptre. Under his august command
May Egypt, as in his illustrious day who's gone,
Be prosperous and strong! Long live King Menephthah!

(Exit.)

SCENE FIFTH.—MOSES, SETI and PENTAUR.

PENTAUR (rushing in): Flee, Moses, flee; for Menephthah is king,
And he has sworn that he will take your life.
MOSES: I fear not the despotic power of Menephthah.
PENTAUR: Friend, needlessly do not expose yourself.
MOSES: I will not rashly put myself in danger's way,
Though I am conscious that I bear a charmed life.
SETI: I second Pentaur's counsel. Moses, flee
While there is time; for Menephthah will brook
The presence of no rival to his power.
PENTAUR: Nor will he long withhold the vengeful stroke;
For not mere dread of a competitor
Whom he has worsted prompts to seek your life;
But hatred of a foe who has deprived
Of one of his sworn friends and useful tools,
Of whose death at your hand he just had heard,
When I came hither to apprize in time
For you to put yourself beyond his power
To injure.
MOSES: Yes, in honorable fight I slew
The man who treacherously struck down my brother, since
He showed a manly spirit to a tyrant's face.
PENTAUR: And he you slew was that opprobrious lord
Who more than any other steeled the will
Of Menephthah to seek by every art
Of tortuous expediency the crown.
SETI: I know the man. A more contemptuous wretch
There was not—selfish to the very core—
Who goaded Menephthah on to the throne,
Not for his love of Menephthah, or thought
Of Egypt's honor, which he would have dragged
Down to the dust to advance his own vile ends.
It had not irked him to have thrust the land
Into the dreadful abyss of civil war,
To have climbed the summit of his base ambition;
Nor did he further Menephthah with words
Of abject flattery, with loyalty
That would have stood the test of adverse fortune;
But as the catspaw to advance his aims;
And thus he would have used you, had he found
The weakness that had given him a hold
To attach himself, like some rank fungus growth
To your aspiring fortune.
MOSES: Thank God there was not
In me disease to breed the parasitic growth
Of such rank creatures, though for lack thereof
Unhealthy Egypt has rejected me
As king.
SETI: And will, I fear, oust you from life,
Unless you haste to put yourself by flight
In safety.
PENTAUR: Flee from this hostile court,
Where every moment's tarrying is rash
Exposure of yourself. Flee; for until
I know you are beyond the vengeful arm
Of Egypt's ruler, peace no more can dwell
In my perturbed breast.

MOSES: Farewell, my friend,
The sweet companion of my student years.
I go far from this court, where fortune may direct
My steps—I know not whither; but of this be well
Assured, there is a destiny directs my movements,
And renders me invulnerable against the assaults
Of Menephthah. And thee, my father, I must leave,
Perchance to look no more upon thy much-loved features:
For age has laid its weight of years upon thy back,
And silvered thy scant hairs, too surely heralding
Death's advent, to inspire the confidence that time,
The leaden-footed, may permit me to return
Ere you have been called elsewhere. But I shall come back,
(Of this I feel as certain as that I am here)
To call with sovereign voice to Egypt to do justice;
Or to hold o'er an unrighteous state the sword of judgment.
Farewell, good friends; the future calls me—calls to what
I know not—but with sovereign voice calls me. Farewell.
(Exit.)

SETI and PENTAUR:
Farewell, and may the powers above defend your life!
(The curtain falls.)

ACT FOURTH.

A wild grazing country, with scattered rocks and cactus. In the background a wilderness of mountains, with the mighty Sinai in the centre, towering above all.

SCENE FIRST.—A group of Shepherds. Time night.

FIRST SHEPHERD: How wondrously the stars shine forth tonight!
Methinks they never seemed to me so bright.
SECOND SHEPHERD: It is the mood in which you see them, brother.
Perchance they were no brighter to another,
Than he has seen them many and many a night,
Till they have faded in the morning light.
THIRD SHEPHERD: What rapture to behold the starry flocks,
What time the sun conceals his golden locks,
Come forth upon the fields of heaven to graze,
Where the moon shepherdess benignant sways.
FOURTH SHEPHERD: Oft do I wonder what the lustrous dew
They sip upon that high ethereal field;
And what the hidden pasturage doth yield
The brightness that shines forth each night anew.
FIFTH SHEPHERD: To me the stars seem like a million eyes
Of some vast being there, that never dies,
Though hidden by the garish light of day,
But holds above the earth eternal sway.
SIXTH SHEPHERD: And how those eyes look down into the heart—
Into its very depths—and make one start
Aghast and horrified at that dark brood
Of fancies that unwelcome there intrude!
SEVENTH SHEPHERD: In sooth the heart is like a wilderness,
Where wolves and direr monsters prowl around,
And sometimes into its most hallowed bound
Intrude, and cause the spirit deep distress.
As when the heavens are dark with many a cloud,
That nurse the wrathful tempests on their breast,
And from our eyes the stars and moon enshroud,
So do these monsters cause the soul unrest.
EIGHTH SHEPHERD: Nor less the sweet vicissitudes of love.
Ah how the heart is tortured by the dear
Enchantment of a maiden, who walks here
Transcendent as the peerless moon above!
SEVENTH SHEPHERD: So have you told your secret. I have known
For many a day that you were troubled sore
By something that weighed on you more and more.
Now, brother, since you have your secret shown,
Pray tell us, who is that transcendent she,
Has robbed you of your soul's tranquillity.
SIXTH SHEPHERD: Do so; for I have noted your pale cheek,
And lustrous eyes; and how you go apart,

As if to converse only with your heart,
Or to the desert air and hills to speak.

FIFTH SHEPHERD: You grow as strange as Moses, who all fear
While they respect; sometimes a wretch esteeming,
Who broods upon the memory ever near
Of some dark deed; sometimes a prophet deeming.

FOURTH SHEPHERD: No one has ever learned the mystery
Of his young life. That he a refugee
From Egypt came amongst us, and has been
A shepherd with us, yet of us not one,
Is all we know of him. What he hath seen,
Ere he came here we know not, or what done.

THIRD SHEPHERD: And yet he showed a princely spirit. Still
Do I remember how he drove away
The rude, discourteous shepherds, who that day
Kept Jethro's maiden daughters waiting, till
Their flocks they'd watered, ere they would give place:
The rude herd shrank abashed from Moses' face.

EIGHTH SHEPHERD: Ah, Jethro; that reminds me of my pain,
And makes me blush for my discourtesy
To that fair flower of maiden modesty,
Who treats me now with arrogant disdain.

SECOND SHEPHERD: Ah, how love turns all topsy-turvy! She
Who suffered contumely erewhile now offers;
And who was rude and boisterous now suffers
The pangs of unrequited love.

EIGHTH SHEPHERD: Ah me!
How restless am I and unsatisfied,
Failing to win from her one gracious smile,
Who passes me in her disdainful pride,
Though I am dying for her all the while!

FIRST SHEPHERD: My brother, much I mourn your grievous case.
But yet, perchance, your suit may not be vain.
Unless she have upon some other swain
Fixed her proud heart, she may unveil her face
To you. If Moses won her sister's hand,
May you not hers, who in no worse case stand?

EIGHTH SHEPHERD: Ah Moses is a man like to no other,
With majesty in every lineament.
He has a form, you must confess, my brother,
To which no maid could be indifferent.
And what if he be lonely and austere,
That uncouth men as some strange being dread,
He is so gentle that no women fear;
And never from his presence children fled.
I have beheld him when his lofty brain
Methought was in the empyrean straying;
And little children on his knees were playing,
As heedless as he were the simplest swain.
That he could win the heart of doting maiden,
Is no assurance I could do the same,
Who have no graces her heart to enflame,
And am with uncouth speech and manners laden.

FIRST SHEPHERD: Perhaps as mediator he may serve you,
If to the decisive point you cannot nerve you.
'Twere not amiss to seek his help. But hark!
What means it that the dogs begin to bark?

It must be that some stranger's coming yonder.
But what can bring one at this hour I wonder.
(Pentaur enters haggard and in rude attire.)

SCENE SECOND.—THE SAME with PENTAUR.

PENTAUR: Men, if to human pity I can move you,
Give to the needs of one in sore distress,
Who will henceforward as a brother love you,
And call upon the Gods above to bless.
A SHEPHERD: We never hungry turn away the stranger,
Who would have food, and refuge craves from danger.
We were more heartless than the wolves about,
Would we to their fell mercy turn him out.
PENTAUR: Thanks, gentle friends. Three days have I been treading
These desert wilds, and have not tasted bread.
Methought towards me death were swiftly speeding,
When to this shelter my good fortune led.
ANOTHER SHEPHERD: 'Tis little we can give you; for our days
Are simply spent within this desert waste;
But you are welcome to it, stranger. Raise
This flagon to your lips, and this food taste.
PENTAUR (drinks): Thanks, my good friends. I feel the warm blood glowing
Within in my veins, that was but now scarce flowing.
(While Pentaur eats one shepherd plays on a pipe, while another sings.)

Pipings, pipings, sweetly sounding
Over the wild and lonely wold.
The silly sheep hear from the fold,
And after the shepherd they go bounding;
Bounding, bounding, o'er rock and scaur,
Led onward by the pipe's sweet power.
He guides them ever yonder, yonder;
Out into the desert wild and drear,
Where the hungry wolves are prowling near;
But they hear the pipe's sweet notes with wonder,
And around like clouds although they lower,
To injure the sheep they have no power.
The desert witch with tones deceiving,
Astray allures him, and the charm,
That did of their wrath the wolves disarm,
Forgotten he has; for her sake leaving
The pathway to follow o'er brake and scaur;
And his scattered sheep the wolves devour.

PENTAUR: Your song brings sad reflections to my breast,
Of what I might have been and have become.
I were not troubled with my soul's unrest,
Had I been ever faithful to my best
Ideal, whate'er had been my earthly doom.
A SHEPHERD: We do not understand you, as we know
Not what reverse has led you to this waste;
But that you have a higher station graced
Than ours in all your bearing do you show,
Though in a garb so wretched do you go.
PENTAUR: 'Tis well you do not understand. My friends,
'Tis true that once I graced a loftier state;

But with the praises of a court elate,
For wealth and station I forsook the ends
Appointed me to follow, and you see
A wretch dependent on your charity.

A SHEPHERD: We fear that you have done some direful deed,
For which your conscience tortures you; but seek
No morbid curiosity to feed
By questioning one who came to us in need,
And cares not of his former life to speak.

PENTAUR: I thank you, friends, and this can say in truth,
That in your thought you wander far astray.
I have no crime committed, as men look
At crime; but that upon an evil day
The aspirations of my generous youth
For the world's passing favors I forsook.

AN OLD SHEPHERD: If that the end of your offending be,
I see not why you should so grievously
Lament your error, as beyond the scope
Of pardon, as if you, young man, were worst
Of criminals. Of all mankind the first
Are you who's failed to attain his youthful hope?

PENTAUR: Ah you can never understand the measure
Of my offending. I was given the treasure
Of generous thought and clear and apt expression,
Which should have made life lovelier, and brought
Me honor. For the favors of a court
I used them; I condoned the harsh oppression
Of tyrants, and have got the tyrant's meed.
When I no further could my manhood lower,
I had to feel, because I would not lead
A slave's life longer, the harsh despot's power.
The honors that I sought have turned to dust
And ashes at my touch; and I have lost
The generous ambition and firm trust
Of my young manhood, that I cannot hope
Now to attain what my prophetic soul
Saw in young manhood; for my spirit tossed
With stormy passions doth in darkness grope,
No more perceiving its illustrious goal.

A SHEPHERD: Behold, the top of Sinai is aflame
With light! A mystic splendor shines therefrom,
Illumining as the clear dawn the gloom
Of midnight, and the stars pale in that flame.

SECOND SHEPHERD: What means that holy splendor, that afa
Shines out into the darkness?

THIRD SHEPHERD: Lo, how clear
The features of the mountain pictured are
In that still radiance! The remote grows near
In that revealing glory.

FOURTH SHEPHERD: May it not
Betoken some high purpose to be bro't
Erelong to consummation?

FIFTH SHEPHERD: It o'erpowers
The spirit, that with reverent awe one lowers
The head before it.

SIXTH SHEPHERD: It appears as calm

As the pale moonlight, yet the dazzled eye
Cannot look square upon it without harm.
SEVENTH SHEPHERD: Methinks it tells us that the hour is nigh
Of changes purposed in this lower sphere
That we inhabit.
EIGHTH SHEPHERD: Ay, it is the dawn,
Precurser of the day already near,
When spirits to the new life will be born.
PENTAUR: How at that vision peace, I have not known
For many a month, upon my soul comes down,
Like gentle dew upon the darkened earth,
To gleam resplendent at the day's new birth!
But lo! how from the mountain pallid lightnings break;
Innumerous ribbons of clear glory; and the earth
Is shaken; and the ear entranced is filled with music,
Like the deep bass of ocean, or the onward movement
Of multitudes, before which opposition dwarfed
Becomes war with inexorable fate; and lo!
Athwart the light the shadow of a man is cast,
Which looms up huge in stature; huge as looms the hero
Of some romantic fable. Is this a mere figment
Of my distorting fancy; or do I behold
Thus in his true proportions the colossal soul,
Once the associate of my dreams, who gave up all
For his ideals; so did himself from the ruin save
That has o'erwhelmed me, who became the tyrant's slave?

SCENE THIRD.—THE SAME with MOSES.

MOSES: Can it be Pentaur I behold in slave's attire?
What adverse fortune hither brings in garb unseemly?
Whate'er have brought you, my old friend, I bid you welcome;
Which I perceive the associates of my humble life
Have done already.
PENTAUR: Moses, they have more royally
Than Pharaoh could have done it.
MOSES: Pharaoh. You have offended
In some way Egypt's ruler, that he clothed you so,
And sent you to the mines of Sinai.
PENTAUR: It is true.
So long as I his slave, if not in wish in action,
Would bask within the noxious influence of his power,
Condoning all his doings, and with specious words
Of flattery singing his rank praises, gold was mine
And honor in men's eyes; but when I could no more
Abase myself to that extent, frowns were my guerdon—
When, to speak more clearly, I with quickened conscience
Began to feel the corroding influence in my soul
Of those gold chains that held me fettered to the court
And Pharaoh's praises, these were changed by his command
For links of iron; and for the rank and perfumed air
Of Thebes, I was ordained to breathe the stifling heats
Of Sinai, where half naked wretches who have grown
Into disfavor labor beneath the driver's lash.
MOSES: But how fell from your limbs the chains, and left you free
To make your hard way hither?
PENTAUR: Ah, the memory
Of what I have been. One who in my better days,

When of true heroism I could sing the praise,
And to the Gods could strike my sacred lyre, had known
And honored me, was grieved I should be so cast down.
He gave me liberties, and at the last set free,
And bade me from the shadow of Egypt's power flee.
But flee I cannot; for the chains of Egypt bind
My spirit, not my limbs. Freedom I do not find,
Though through the wilderness a wanderer I have been,
For many a day, and have no fellow creature seen.
Unfaith in men, myself, the Gods, my soul enthralls;
The monstrous power of nature and custom so appals
My spirit that a pigmy I am in my own eyes;
I cannot as I used to noble action rise.
Ungirded for the conflict stern with life I go;
Restless; dissatisfied; cursed with a nameless woe.
I wander as a spirit vainly seeking rest;
Yet cannot find, for in my soul I am oppressed.

MOSES: Pentaur, death is the antidote for all our ills.

PENTAUR: The very thought of death with a strange horror fills.

MOSES: The guardian of the portal that doth the future bar
Is Death, upon whose brow hope shines the morning star.

PENTAUR: But ah! the awful darkness and mystery beyond!

MOSES: By him who nothing ventures nothing is ever found.

PENTAUR: If one could have assurance of life beyond the grave.

MOSES: Courage asks no assurance; but scorns to live a slave.

A SHEPHERD: See how the mountain flames up dreadful to the sight!
From its torn entrails red flames glare upon the night!

PENTAUR: Moses, a frenzy siezes me; I must away.
That sight appals me! Hence! I must not, cannot stay.

(Thunderings are heard and the shepherds show visible signs of terror. Pentaur stands wavering between the impulse to flight and the restraining presence of Moses.)

MOSES: Pentaur, you are lost unless you can restrain
Your restless frenzy. On, although it cause you pain,
With me to yonder summit; and life's deep mystery
Will be revealed to you, and this will make you free.
This is the crisis of your life; if now you take
The unmanly part henceforth your chains no power can break.
But if you venture, willing with your life to win
The guerdon of the future, freed from the bonds within,
You will be sovereign of the world, controlling fate,
Though as a slave for recognition long you wait.

(The thunders increase.)

PENTAUR: Oh, I am tortured as if furies ruled my soul!
A passion masters me which I cannot control.

MOSES: Stay, stay, blind man; or you are lost; forever lost!
Be true now to yourself and you shall win the goal
Of your ambition.

PENTAUR: Never, never! I am lost!
But ah! the sweet delight; the ecstacy; the thrill
Of madness; the frenzy of fine feeling that doth fill
With such unwonted pleasure! Once again is given
The sweet intoxication, that to the seventh heaven
Raised me when it was mine to have expression free.
Nay, do not urge me; do not stay me; let me be
A wanderer; ay, a slave, so I through every vein
Can feel the ecstatic thrill of pleasure that is pain!

I'm played on as a harp. Away! Away! I crave
No higher good. So I can feel the exquisite thrill
Of this sweet, syren music, I'm content to fill
Up all my days with this sweet madness; nature's slave.
(He rushes out. Lightnings and thunderings break upon Sinai and the earth is shaken with a mighty earthquake.)

A SHEPHERD: Away! What spirit can endure the dreadful sight?

ANOTHER SHEPHERD: How the wierd lightnings gleam upon the startled night!

A THIRD SHEPHERD: The muttering thunders fill the spirit with affright!

A FOURTH SHEPHERD: Escape from God's wrath and unconquerable might!

(Shepherds flee, leaving Moses alone.)

SCENE FOURTH.—MOSES alone.

(As the scene advances the mountain becomes more vividly aglow with light, sending forth streamers of various colors, as in the most brilliant display of the aurora borealis. The thunderings are heard from time to time, and the voice speaks from behind the scene, appearing to come from the heart of the mountain. It may be presented as a chant in deep bass.)

MOSES: Alas, weak man, born to have been a prophet; born
To feel the thrill of strong, imperious passion, that
Would wreak itself in fair creation; but too weak
To endure the temptation, from the chalice of the Gods
Thou hast drunk poison and art cursed with madness! Life
As art to him who is its master is a good
Incalculable; but to the many a stern fate,
Which holds them in harsn bondage. To be free the soul
Must first assert its freedom. Till it have stricken off
Its bonds, to strike the fetters from tne limbs frees not.
But how shall one win power to free the souls of men,
That having shaken from their limbs the tyrant's fetters,
They may be free indeed? This is the question; this
The problem he must solve who into liberty
Would lead his people. Once methought no more was needed
To free men than to say to them, Be free; but free
They were not at my mandate. Words will not avail;
Nor outward change that issues not from change within.
One must acquire a mightier potency to move
The heart. With this well might I hope to free my people;
Without it I am nothing. But whence acquire that power?

VOICE FROM SINAI:
Go thou down into Egypt; call Pharaoh to account,
And to my people say, The God of Abraham,
The God of Isaac and of Jacob is your God.

MOSES: To Egypt I? And with naught but the spoken word
Arouse my people to assert their manhood? God,
I am not eloquent of speech; I cannot do it.

THE VOICE: Who is it that enkindles speech, and makes it power,
That as the sun's strong beams which stir the slumbering seed
To life, the word becomes force in the inert soul?

MOSES: Have I not found the effort futile? Must I go
With only words to attempt the impossible,

THE VOICE: With God
Nothing's impossible.
MOSES: If this be not the voice
Of my ambition or dear hope, but that of God.
THE VOICE: Put your hand in your bosom.
MOSES: Alas! 'tis white as snow.
A leper!
THE VOICE: Such, if now you hesitate, you will be.
Put it once more within your bosom.
MOSES: It is healed.
But I am such a pigmy to attempt so vast
An undertaking.
THE VOICE: The infiinite strength of God is yours.
MOSES: I must, or see my hope evaporate in dreams.
I must go forward to face death if it shall come;
To be esteemed a fool for God and for my people;
Or here wear out the little term of life remaining,
A shepherd, having forfeited a crown to save
My people, and lacked manhood to attempt the task.
That were to make life a delusion; were to make
Egregious folly my renunciation. God,
With thy strong help I will not, will not thus be found
Wanting at this the supreme crisis of my life.
I will go down to Egypt—will, come what come may;
And will arouse my people from their lethagy,
Or die in the attempt.
THE VOICE: You do not go alone;
For God is with you, and erelong will human helpers
Stand at your side. Your brother, Aaron, comes even now,
Who will your efforts second with readiness of speech.
In other minds he will make pregnant what you teach.
(The thunderings cease, the mountain assumes its wonted aspect and day dawns.)

SCENE FIFTH.—MOSES and AARON.

MOSES: Welcome, my brother, whom I see again
After long years of separation. You
Have come a rugged journey, it would seem
From your appearance.
AARON: Never such a night
Did I experience as the last. The heavens
Were all aflame with a wierd, awful light,
That from the heart of Sinai issued. Thunders,
But not the heralds of the rain, I heard;
And earth was shaken; and I had to breast
A storm of elements invisible,
That made my way a difficult one to traverse
Against resistance. Phantoms I beheld
Moreover. Past me rushed, as if pursued
By furies, or resistless driven before
The winds, a naked man, with streaming hair,
And aspect wild, yet smiling and attent,
As fixed in ecstacy, or as he heard
Strange music in his madness; and he crooned
A song, of which, as he rushed past me, scarce
A dozen words I caught, which were as follows:
"O the sweet frenzy when the spirit strives

No more, but in accord with natures lives,
Whose mighty life doth all his being fill,
And through his trembling limbs like music thrill!"

MOSES: Poor fellow, thou wast given the sensitive soul,
To throb responsive to the mighty music
Of life; but not the reason to control
The imperious impulse, therefore art thou fallen
Into the hell of madness, where thou goest,
Not without rapture doubtless, but a slave,
Possessing not thy genius but possessed
As with a demon. Yet I could have saved
Would'st thou have listened at thy fatal hour,
And with me have gone forward though to pain,
Foregoing pleasure for the spirit's gain.
But tell me, Aaron, what the grievous state
Of our compatriots, who in Goshen wait
The deliverance God has promised soon to bring,
From Egypt's selfish lords and tyrant king.

AARON: Alas! Each day their fetters heavier grow,
As Egypt's lords more proud and cruel show.
They are so driven that life is burdensome,
And death deliverance from a hateful doom.
They're routed from their slumber ere the sun
Across the heavens has his bright course begun;
And till his splendor fades into the west,
Though weary brain and limb they cannot rest;
For over them like sateless vultures lower
The fiends who drive them till they can no more,
Compelling to the uttermost to feed
With dollars coined of blood inhuman greed.

MOSES: My heart within me burns at what you've told.
O'erthrown must be the tyrant power of gold.
The sacrifice of manhood must be stayed,
Though earth to attain it be a ruin made.
The state is purchased at too dear a price,
When men must toil like beasts that it may rise.
But 'tis not needful; the republic grows
From man's own bosom, and his freedom shows.
It is not this, but a usurping state
Of robbers, that on manhood weighs like fate.
The power of Egypt is a tyranny
O'er Israel, from which she must be free.
But only as the people to new life awake,
Can they arise and from their limbs the fetters shake.

AARON: But whence shall come the power that will arouse
The people from their lethargy, and give
The might and courage to stand unappalled
Before the long-established strength of Egypt,
And baffle it?

MOSES: Aaron, there is a Power
Unfaith must reckon with, that o'er the world
Is sovereign, as the sun above the clouds.
God rules, however sensuous men deny;
And he can hurl the mighty from their seats,
And raise up them of low degree, to change
The established order, which eternal seems
To superficial thinkers; but to them

Who see more deeply, scarcely more enduring
Than clouds which show a moment and are gone.

AARON: Then why has tyranny so long a lease
Of power? Why does not God assert His might
To hurl the tyrants from their thrones, that truth
And righteousness may be at once established.

MOSES: God works for manhood, and through man prevails.
He strikes not off men's fetters till their hearts are free;
Then they can rise like giants, and themselves shake off
Their fetters, and there is no power in heaven or earth
Can bind them. Like the light within the bursting bud,
His energy long works unseen within the heart;
But soon the energy there generated shows
Itself in movements, altering the state of things
Into another order of the world than that
Which has endured unchanged perhaps for centuries.

AARON: But will He do it?

MOSES: Yea, He will and is so doing.
Me He has bidden go, to bring to consciousness
His inward workings, doing thus for Israel
The midwife's service, that the child be brought to birth—
The wonder-child of a new culture—in her womb;
Of God begotten. Israel shall be free; for life
Is in her; life in germ, which as that in the seed
Must burst from its sense-swathings, and reveal itself
In a new organism that shall make the world
Subservient to its uses.

AARON: Brother, I am thrilled
With a new hope, hearing your words which seem prophetic.
An answering voice within my soul says, This is truth.
This is the very thought I have been travailing with,
But could not bring to birth. Now do I understand
The soul's deep yearnings, which not understood disturbed.
I know why my dissatisfaction; why I writhed
So in my bondage, till my life grew hateful to me;
Why I was driven out hither—driven as by scourges hither—
Where I have found thee who hast made all clear. Brother,
It was the soul within me struggling to be free—
Yea, bursting from its cerements as the human face
Springs from its animal body in the Sphynx that looks
With stony eyes down on the desert and the Nile.
Nor was I in my restlessness alone. The same
Deep mystery is struggling for solution in
The heart of millions. Let us go to solve it for them.
You who have wakened me can waken others;
And I who've felt the power given you can mediate
Between you and the people.

MOSES: Aaron, we will go.
Your words have taken every trace of hesitancy
Remaining. God I feel is with me and will do
What He has promised. The hour of Israel has struck,
And irresistibly she will go on her way,
Whatever foes arise her onward march to stay.

(Curtain falls.)

ACT FIFTH.

The stage presents in the centre foreground a rude altar, on which is laid the paschal lamb. Chorus of youths, with Aaron as leader on one side, and chorus of maidens with Miriam as leader on the other. All are attired in pilgrim's garb, as for a journey. Jochebed in the centre.

SCENE FIRST.

JOCHEBED: Thank God my aged eyes have lived to see
The dawning of this day, for which I've prayed
Incessantly, since I a girl in years
Wed Amram and gave birth to my first child.
My son in God's hands has become the means
Of leading Israel to the larger life
Of freedom, that is opening for the seed
Of Abraham so long enslaved. This night
Of darkness that has settled o'er the earth
Will break our chains; for in the guise of death
God walks amidst the gloom to smite our foes,
That with the rising of tomorrow's sun
We may go forth from Egypt to the land
Of freedom, promised to our sires of old.
Wherefore, as we partake of this slain lamb,
And bread unleavened and of bitter herbs,
Protected from the death that stalks abroad,
By blood upon the doorposts and the lintels
Of all the houses placed by God's command,
Let us express our heartfelt thanks to Him,
Who miracles has wrought in our behalf
That stagger sense and yet compel belief.
CHORUS: God of our fathers, who thyself hast shown
Our God and constant friend in evil days,
We render Thee our heartfelt thanks; we raise
Our hands in prayer to Thee, who art alone
The One before whom mortals should bow down.
Thou didst create us, and Thou guid'st our ways;
And for our sakes Thou smitest with amaze
The tyrants who oppress, and do not own
Thy righteous sovereignty. Thou over all
Creation art supreme. All powers obey
Thee, save unrighteous men, who laugh to scorn
Thy mild authority, till Thy hand fall
In judgment on them. We beneath Thy sway
Are free, who have the tyrant's fetters worn.
A YOUTH sings: My soul was like the stormy sea
When angry winds and waves contend.
Dark were the heavens over me,
And wasted I my powers did spend.
But now no longer God disdaining,

Enthroned within me He is reigning,
My passions with strong hand refraining.
A MAIDEN sings: Though mightier than the mightiest
Who ravage earth, within the breast
He reigns with the soft sway of love.
And ah! what ecstacy of feeling;
What rapture through the members stealing;
What balm the spirit's sorrows healing;
When, as the master's fingers move
Across the throbbing chords, he thrills
The spirit, and with music fills!
A SECOND YOUTH: Days as through a gloomy wood
I wandered lost and desolate.
The world was one vast solitude,
And over me was pitiless fate.
God, like the light on darkness breaking,
Hath come into that drear world, making
The pathway clear that I was taking;
And now with vigor I'm advancing
Towards the goal before me glancing.
A SECOND MAIDEN: As when the sun in glory rises
The gladdened earth in beauty lies;
And every drop of dew surprises
In some bright gem's resplendent guise;
So when God on the soul hath broken,
Clothed it appears with beauty strange;
In every teardrop is a token
Of Him who wrought the marvellous change.
JOCHEBED: My sons and daughters, such a change shall come
O'er stricken Israel with the coming morn.
Already pales before the brightening dawn
Of our clear hope the dark night's sombre gloom.
Out of the tears that we have shed shall grow
A rarer beauty to adorn our life;
As shines amidst its wild turmoil and strife
Upon the bosom of the cloud the bow.
MIRIAM: Methinks I see arise another earth
Upon the vision, glorious to behold.
This night, the dark hours of her travail told,
Shall bring a nation to her hour of birth.
Begotten in sorrow, she shall issue free
To start on her illustrious career,
Strength shall be given her, that she shall fear
No foe that may her strong opponent be.
AARON: I see her move triumphant on her way,
And foes go down before her that assail.
O'er every obstacle she doth prevail,
That bars her course, or would her progress stay.
Nor sea nor desert stop her onward march
Towards the shining goal she would attain.
God is her gonfalon; the surge in vain
Confronts; the hot winds of the desert parch.
WHOLE CHORUS: Full panoplied for war the nation springs
To being, like the sun from the dark womb
Of night, and enters on her glorious course.
Our God, who out of formless chaos brings
Creation forth, hath formed her in the gloom
Of bondage, and hath given perennial force

To issue on her way triumphant; wings
Hath given her spirit, that in days to come
She shall soar upwards to the living source
Of being, and deriving thence the might
Of the eternal, here a burning light
Shall beam her glory forth into the night.
AARON and MIRIAM: When heart and hand united are
It is a joy to think and do;
But when betwixt them there is war,
With pain doth one his tasks pursue.
He like the wretched galley-slave
Is driven to toil without surcease.
The joy in action that men crave
He has not; nor in rest finds peace.
CHORUS: God brings our spirits into sweet accord,
That all our powers act in harmony;
And action, when there is expression free,
Not pain, but purest pleasure doth afford.
Ah, it is sweet to think and do,
When thought and action issue from the soul;
When outward force doth not control
The spirit free its own ends to pursue!
JOCHEBED: So shall our spirits be. Tomorrow's sun
Will bring our freedom. We shall leave this land
Of bondage never to return. Elsewhere
We shall fulfill the purpose of our life;
Not without trials surely; for our course
Can never be without them in this world;
Nor without honor, if we will be true
To God's high calling. Conquering the foes
And obstacles against us we shall move
Forever onward to the shining goal,
That has been set for our attainment. Free
We shall be, if to God and our own selves
Not recreant, with courage we oppose
Whatever obstacles, whatever foes
Confront us, trusting God, who doth control
Our destiny, to bring us to the goal.
But lo! one comes who seems not with our zeal
To be inspired, or our young hope to feel.

SCENE SECOND—THE SAME with ZIPPORAH.

ZIPORAH: Moses, a bloody husband do I fear
Thou'lt be to me. My boys, my pretty boys,
Gershom and Eliezer, didst thou take
And circumcise on our way hither, me
To hear their cries compelling; and hast brought
Into this hateful land of slavery,
To roam no more in freedom the green hills,
But to behold crushed millions, and perchance
To grow up to like thralldom. Ah, alack!
JOCHEBED: Who is it mourns her individual ills,
When Israel is travailing to the birth
Of a new life?
ZIPPORAH: A mother who has seen
Her children torn from their sweet native hills,
To grow up in the pestilential air

Of bondage; who should have breathed forth their life
In freedom, as some wild flower on the desert
Expresses fragrance.

JOCHEBED: Would you have your boys
Grow up dependents upon niggard nature,
Forgoing the young hope of Israel
For the illusory freedom of the waste,
Lest they should feel the sting of human sorrow?

CHORUS: The day of our deliverance is at hand.
The dawn smiles on the darkness of our night
Of sorrows, and they pale before the light,
As phantoms fleeing from an enchanter's wand.
Already the dim outlines of the land,
Erelong to rise resplendent on the sight,
Of equal freedom and triumphant right,
Before the longing eyes in vision stand.
The tyrant quails upon his throne; and they
Who have afflicted us in trembling wait
The morrow, that shall consummation bring
Of judgments fallen upon them. With the day
Will vanish the young glory of their state,
Whose requiem with our freedom we will sing.

ZIPORAH: Will slaves arise in judgment and bring down
The pride of Pharaoh? Direful do I fear
Will prove the ambitious project. Pharaoh's troops
Will quell the uprising, and, my husband low,
I shall behold my boys in vengeance slain,
Or sold into harsh bondage, who had roamed
The hills of Midian free, but for the wild
Emprize drew my rash husband hither.

JOCHEBED: Free
They cannot be except as Israel's free.
The freedom that would its own pleasure find
While others groan in servitude is blind.
To roam the desert with no settled aim
Is freedom that is hardly worth the name.
True freedom is that freedom which we share
With others who our joys and sorrows share.

CHORUS: God, Thou art battling for us to make free
From all that fetters. Thou hast shown Thy might
In our behalf. On Egypt Thou hast brought
Dire evils; portents, wherein do we see
Thy changeless purpose to uphold our right,
And to do judgment. What hast Thou not wrought
For our sakes, to break down the stubborn will
Of Pharaoh, and compel him to fulfil
Thy purpose! Famine, pestilence and blight
And insect terrors on our side have fought.

ZIPPORAH: But what have all God's terrors done? The heart
Of Pharaoh has been hardened. For a time
Although he have relented, when the scourge
Has been removed, he has more cruelly
Entreated Israel—has a heavier yoke
Of bondage laid upon the people, as,
Repentant of his weakness, he would vent
His spite against the power had humbled him
Upon the helpless.

JOCHEBED: Daughter, you are blind
Through the excess of love, perceiving not
That, in your dread lest evil should befall
The loved one, you would make dishonored. Base
It were to hold for one's own pleasure him
Whose absence—aye, whose sacrifice—might win
A people's freedom; base the liberty
Of action in some world apart from men
Your boys might be possessed of, while the boys
Of other mothers groan in bondage. Free
He only is without dishonor, who,
The priceless boon of liberty itself,
As it were nothing, for the sake of others,
That they may share it with him, can renounce.
ZIPPORAH: Alas the grievous day that calls on me
To sacrifice my husband and my babes!
JOCHEBED: Alas the fatal lack of faith in God,
That paralyzes effort in the hour
For action!
ZIPPORAH: Mighty are the odds against us.
JOCHEBED: God the omnipotent is on our side.
CHORUS: He is our shield who makes invulnerable
Against assault. As we go on our way
Goes down before Him every obstacle,
As shadows vanish at the approach of day.
What has most mighty seemed, before His might
Is nothing. Powers that have for ages stood
Go out before Him, as the sombre night
Before the sun advancing as a god
Up to his zenith splendor. Thou hast given,
God of our fathers, earnest of thy zeal
For our sakes. With the tyrant Thou hast striven
With what portentous weapons for our weal!
HALF CHORUS OF YOUTHS:
God hath brought upon the land
Snake and lizard, frog and toad.
Insect pests at His command
Frenzied men to madness goad.
Murrain slays the cattle; hail
And mildew have the harvest blasted.
Famine and disease assail
Them who have God's anger tasted.
HALF CHORUS OF MAIDENS:
But we have suffered not as they
Who have against our God offended.
We've found the rigor of His sway
To be with gentle mercy blended.
Upon the tyrant is expended
His wrath: His hand doth heavy weigh:
His bounty hath our course attended,
As He doth lead to freedom's day.
CHORUS: And now His last stroke is falling, most grievous of all,
Death stalks through the land, and on Pharaoh in terror doth fall.
In palace and hovel the first born of mortals is slain;
And the first born of cattle are stricken, who share thus their pain.
Ah Egypt, this night shalt thou rue to the latest of days.

Thy glory is fallen, is fallen, and none shall e'er raise.
Thy glory is fallen; thy manhood goes down to the tomb;
O'er the day of thy splendor is falling the night's sombre gloom.
The future no longer is with thee; but ours is the strife;
The power that has brought thee to death has called us to life.

SCENE THIRD—THE SAME, PENTAUR enters with a garland of ivy on his head, in fantastic attire, and with a harp in his hand.

PENTAUR (sings): There lies a pool in the moonlight clear—
Mononton, Mononton;
In the pale moonlight as silver clear,
Mononton, Mononton.
Beside it beneath the purple skies,
On a bed of purple violets lies,
Unveiled in naked loveliness,
The awful beauty of a form,
That like a spell doth his spirit calm,
Whose eyes that vision may chance to bless.
The Wolf that prowling the wood by night,
Mononton, Mononton,
Comes to that pool in the pale moonlight,
Mononton, Mononton,
And catching sight of that lovely form,
On her perfumed couch by the water calm,
Forgets the hunger with which he came;
And the Panther that crouches with purpose fell,
Feels the might of that potent spell;
And quenched is his passion's devouring flame.
Out of the darkness a youth draws near,
Mononton, Mononton,
And approaching the pool in the moonlight clear,
Mononton, Mononton,
He catches a glimpse of that form which lies,
Unveiled beneath the purple skies,
In the stars' twinkling radiance;
He has had a vision and it is gone;
For the curtain of darkness again is drawn;
But love was begotten in that one glance.

JOCHEBED: Who art thou who singest
Words of little import and much sound;
And a vision bringest
Wherein merely sensuous beauty's found?

PENTAUR: One to whom 'twas given
To utter Egypt's life in sounding rhyme;
Who from her court was driven,
In lonely wilds to waste life's precious prime.

HALF CHORUS OF MAIDENS: Alas! we grieve for thee,
A spirit fitted to the noblest strain;
But like a sweet harp out of tune,
Thou art condemned to be
A wanderer, and to waste in accents vain
Thy passion, baffled ere its noon.

HALF CHORUS OF YOUTHS:
We see in thee an image of the pride
Of Egypt, turned aside
From its true goal, in madness issuing
By the blind folly of her king.

PENTAUR: Egypt indeed is mad, and bitterly
She must repent her folly. Low
Is her young manhood. Ah, the anguished cry
That rises from the land. No foe
With human weapons could have dealt a blow
So fatal. Fallen is her pride;
The flower of her young manhood lies now low
In death beneath the direful stroke,
Dealt in the silent watches of the night.
In palace and in hovel broke
The dread destroyer with resistless might;
And Egypt's first born all have died.
A bitter lamentation; maid and bride,
Mother and aged father mourn.
Egypt is desolate for her young manhood gone.
Isis for her young Horus mourns.
Old Nilus mourns for his young playfellows,
Who sported with his waves, and mourning goes
Through the sad waste to flood the sea with tears,
For them whose joyous shout he hears
No longer making jubilant the land.
Alas! alas! the burning sand
Flows down upon the fields they used to tread.
Silent Egypt lies and dead;
For her young manhood fallen, desolate;
For her young manhood desolate.

CHORUS: We mourn the loss, oh Egypt, mourn
Of thy first born,
Although for our sakes was the stroke
Thy sceptre broke.
Ah, couldest thou have been to us
More generous,
We had not triumphed in thy loss;
Thy bitter cross
Would not have been our promised gain.
God in thy pain
Had not been forced to open before
Us freedom's door.

ZIPPORAH: Alas! sad mother who with bitter tears
Must mourn the loss of them thy love endears!
The vision that hath haunted me with woe
I see fulfilled in Egypt's manhood low.
Poor stricken Isis who her Horus weeps!
I mourn who in death's sombre bosom sleeps.

HALF CHORUS OF YOUTHS:
So have our brothers fallen, and their blood
Hath been a seed sown in a fertile soil.
They have not fallen profitless; their toil
In God's hand hath accrued to us in good.

HALF CHORUS OF MAIDENS:
Sombre Death, who dark stoled goeth
Through the land, and tears soweth,
As Night sows dewdrops o'er the earth,
When shall our strong champion,
As from the burning east the sun,
With blinding glory issue forth,
To battle with thee and o'ercome,
As he the drear night's sombre gloom?

JOCHEBED: Daughters, the hour of God's appearing is at hand.
The champion He has raised up erelong will stand
Amonst us, and will lead us to the promised land.
PENTAUR: He comes, I saw upon the flaming mount,
In guise transcending human strength; a form
Colossal, that the startled sense, o'ercome,
Shrank from him as a God the spirit quails from.
Hence! his presence I cannot aby,
Who, Egypt's fate, in sombre guise has gone
Througout the land, and stricken her first born.
His is the hand God hath with terror armed,
That Egypt hath irreparably harmed. (Goes out.)
CHORUS: But unto us a savior did our God ordain,
To lead us to the goal set for us to attain.
The power to Egypt fatal from our bonds hath freed.
Who as death triumphs may to nobler manhood lead.

SCENE FOURTH.—JOCHEBED, ZIPPORAH, AARON, MIRIAM, CHORUS and MOSES, the latter clad in a black robe and holding in his hand a sceptre and with face resplendent (this effect may be produced by a phosphorescent mask). A jewel like a star gleams upon his forehead.

CHORUS: Hail to our champion, resplendent as the sun,
When bursting from the sombre womb of night he comes
To make the earth irradiant with his presence! Hail,
Thou prophet of the almighty God, whom, as to none
Before thee, He has spoken with; with whom o'ercome
The might of Pharaoh, doomed inevitably to fail!
HALF CHORUS OF YOUTHS:
We welcome thee, our chief, with power to lead
In battle with assailants that confront;
But more than to endure the battle's brunt,
With power to a new sphere of life to lead.
We welcome thee, whom God hath made indeed
Our chieftain, in that where thought were not wont
To dwell thou leadest, opening a font
Of living waters, whence the soul's deep need
Is quenched. Into the darkness that before
Baffles the spirit, thou shalt lead us forth,
Enlightening our way, until we come
Into the land ordained for us of yore;
Where life shall have for us its highest worth;
Where shall our spirits break forth into bloom.
HALF CHORUS OF MAIDENS:
We welcome thee, with now resplendent face,
And brow star-jeweled, who hast brought our day,
Of sombre Egypt breaking the harsh sway,
Beneath which we lay groaning, till abase
Thou didst for us her gloomy pride of place.
Ah heavy did thy hand upon her weigh,
That her young manood in the dust did lay,
Ere she would listen to our grievous case,
Permitting us to go forth free. We praise
Our God, who through thee our deliverance wrought,
And through the sea and desert is to lead.
God of our fathers, wondrous are Thy ways!

How mightily for our sakes hast Thou fought!
How graciously hast helped us in our need!

MOSES: 'Twere well you give the honor all to God;
For I am nothing but his servant; but
The channel of His grace. It is His might
Exalts me; gives power to my spoken word,
That like the seed implanted in the soil
Has proved a pregnant germ within your minds
To issue in new life. It is His hand
Hath stricken Pharaoh, striving to arouse
Through portents to a reasonable mood,
Ere dealing its most direful stroke. In vain;
The stubborn king but hardened more his heart,
Refusing to give place to reason, till
Compelled thereto by pitiless logic he
Could not refute. At last forced has he been
To listen; forced to see that tyranny
Issues in death; but not until dire death
Had the most dear extortion made—had taken
His first born; and on every Egyptian sire
Had laid the same hard tax. Now Pharaoh yields,
Permitting us not merely to go forth;
But urging, yea, compelling, lest the curse
Of our dire presence bring a heavier doom.

JOCHEBED: Then has the hour of freedom truly come?
The sun that now is rising is to shine
On an enfranchised race?

MOSES: It is indeed.
The people who prepared for their departure
Have eaten the pascal lamb and bitter herbs
And watched the waning of this fatal night,
Already have received command to march;
And Joshua and Caleb muster them,
By tribes and companies in ordered ranks,
To start as soon as from the pregnant east
The young sun rises.

JOCHEBED: Welcome is the news,
Which I have prayed for all the weary years,
Since first my heart began for Israel
To feel.

MIRIAM: Nor is it unto me less welcome,
Who from the earliest days that I remember,
Have had instilled in me the promises
To Abraham and to our fathers given,
That I have thought of nothing, dreamed of nothing,
But Israel's welfare.

AARON: Nor to me, who, stirred
By hatred of the wrongs that we have suffered,
Have cared not for my life as it was lived
In bondage, yearning for the day of freedom.

ZIPORAH: Welcome it is to me; and yet my heart
Looks to the future with foreboding.

MOSES: Why,
My Zipporah, dost thou alone commingle
A note discordant in the symphony
Of glad rejoicing all but you express?

ZIPPORAH: I foresee struggles and long wanderings,
And sore discouragements ere long to come.

CHORUS: God is our shield, a very present help
In time of trouble. He who in our hour
Of deepest need did not forsake, but bent
To our entreaty, and hath used His power
In our behalf to overcome our foes,
Will help when other dangers round us close.
MOSES: Your words, the expression of a settled faith,
Are justified by facts. What God has done
To help us is an earnest He will do
All that is needful to give victory
O'er foes that may assail us, and to rise
Superior to the obstacles confront.
But hark! A herald comes from Pharaoh. We must give
His words a welcome. Possibly he has already
Repented of the leniency extorted from him,
And aims to battle further with the will of God.

SCENE FIFTH.—THE SAME, HERALD.

MOSES: What message from King Menephthah hath brought you hither—
Brought in such haste—whose last command methought was given
To void as speedily as possible the land,
Where he has reason to regret our presence as
Of direful import?
HERALD: Ye have grown too self-important,
Gloating over Egypt's sorrows, whom the Gods
Are smiting.
MOSES: Smitten indeed is Egypt for her sins,
And by the one God who has power to smite—the God
Who gave the power to Pharaoh, which he has abused;
And who has called him to account,—called him in signs
Portentous, which, if he had heeded, had not fallen
The last dire stroke has robbed him of his heir and cast
All Egypt into mourning.
HERALD: Ah, the bitter stroke!
But think not Pharaoh will repent or change for this,
Or aught that may befall. Though when his wound was fresh
He yielded, blind with sorrow,—to the importunities
Of those around him yielded,—he repents his weakness;—
His former doings he does not repent of, and will not;—
And bids me say to you, and to the people, you
Mislead, go back to your slave's labor, and desist
From dreams of freedom ye cannot materialize,
Unless ye conquer all the strength of his trained armies,
Which will be down upon ye if ye think to flee,
Or contumaceously resist his sovereign will.
MOSES: Then listen to a will more sovereign than Pharaoh's.
God, who has spoken through me, and who for the last time
Now speaks through me to Pharaoh, says, If Pharaoh yield not,
But follow Israel, he follows to his death.
In the Red Sea, whose waves, obedient to His will
Whose breath the wind is, parted shall let Israel pass
Dry shod, shall Pharaoh and his chivalry go down,
O'erwhelmed by the tumultuous waters turning back
To occupy their bed forsaken. Of her king
Her army and her lords shall Egypt in one day

Be reft. All shall go down beneath the pitiless surge;
And not a man of all the thousands who pursue
God-guided Israel shall return to tell the tale
Of Egypt's last bereavement. Only the wild waves
That lap the beach shall in their hollow music tell
The story; and the carcasses thrown on the sands,
And broken chariots and scattered arms, shall show
To wondering eyes the last defeat of Egypt's greatness.
This to Pharaoh is my message. Israel goes
This day forth from the land of bondage, notwithstanding
Pharaoh's threats, who follows at his certain peril.

HERALD: Then Pharaoh bids me say, that he accepts your challenge.
It shall be seen which is the mightier, he or you;
The Gods of Egypt or the Gods ye worship. Arms
Shall settle once for all the quarrel. If your slaves
Unarmed can face triumphantly the arms of Pharaoh,
Which never yet have known defeat, they may be free:
If not, the alternative is death or slavery.

MOSES: He has pronounced his doom. Upon the Red Sea's plain
The conflict must be fought will prove his boasts how vain.

SCENE SIXTH.—MOSES, JOCHEBED, ZIPPORAH, AARON, MIRIAM, CHORUS.

CHORUS: Will opposition to our freedom never cease?
Must strife and turmoil be our portion everywhere,
Until within the silent grave we shall find peace?
When our fair hopes to their fulfilment seemed so near,
Uprises like a ghastly spectre from the grave
The power has trodden us down. Far flees the good we crave,
And peace, sweet peace, like dew comes down upon the breast
But where the wicked trouble not, the weary rest.

HALF CHORUS OF MAIDENS:
Will tyranny ne'er cease its baleful sway?
Will the strong even to the bitter end
Oppress the weak? Will their hand heavy weigh
Upon the defenceless, until they shall spend
Their last resources in a war with fate?
Ah, whither shall we look for freedom; where
Hope for deliverance, if God do not care,
And unto us restore our lost estate?

HALF CHORUS OF YOUTHS:
At least we may find freedom in the grave,
Where on one couch the monarch and the slave
Lie side by side, the jewelled diadem
And servile frock no longer parting them.
The dust of kings shall mingle with the dust
Of those whom they have treated with disdain.
The might of arms and wealth wherein they trust
Against this last opponent will prove vain.

ZIPPORAH: Death's baleful image I have seen,
In visions that have troubled sleep,
Since with my husband I forsook
The meadows and the pastures green,
Where I had led my father's sheep
To the still pool and murmuring brook.

MIRIAM: Alas! Will sorrows never ending,
With our sweetest rapture blending,
Like the bitter drop of gall
In the wine cup, poison all?
When hope, like a delicate flower
Opens in the bosom, ever
Must the dark storms round it lower,
That it come to blossom never?

AARON: When the soul to life awaking,
Dreaming that its chains are breaking,
Must it see the heavens clouded,
That the crimson flush of morning,
Where the day of freedom's dawning,
Is obscured; the sun enshrouded?

JOCHEBED: Is not faith the eye that sees
Behind the clouds the radiant sun,
Shining howe'er they conceal?
Presently he will reveal
His splendor, and the day begun
In storms, will in the azure peace
Of victory issue. Life to flower,
Beneath the warm sun's quickening power,
Will burst in that triumphant hour.

MOSES: The truest wisdom, mother, have you spoken.
The day of freedom has in splendor broken,
Although a moment sombre clouds obscure,
That we behold not from the ether pure
The far-irradiant splendor issuing,
Will bring our spirits to their balmy spring.
But we shall see that light triumphant is,
And that before it darkness vanishes.
The embattled hosts of Pharaoh shall go down, no more
To trouble us, when we have passed the waters o'er:
As we shall pass; for God hath spoken,
Of whose power we have many a token,
That He can do what He resolves to do.
By Him led on, we'll pass the waters through,
That back o'er Pharaoh's army flowing,
Shall bury them beneath the rolling surge.
And the wild waves shall sing their mournful dirge,
While we beyond them onward going,
Athwart the desert to the promised land
Of freedom, march beneath our God's command.

A MAIDEN sings:
Alas we fear the embattled power
Of Pharaoh, that doth o'er us lower,
Dire vengeance upon us to shower.

A YOUTH sings:
Weaponless must we oppose them?
What the power that o'erthrows them,
If God's hosts do not enclose them?

MOSES: Our God is ever striving with the foe
Of human freedom, to bring low;
Low even as the dust.
The power in which men trust
Will prove a shadow when our God opposes.
Around us like a fortress He encloses;

L. of C.

And all the might of Pharaoh cannot harm.
Therefore feel no alarm,
Howe'er portentous seem the tyrant's power.
'Twill vanish like the clouds that o'er us lower,
Before the sovereign sun's invincible might;
And as the earth irradiant in the light,
Life shall become all beautiful beneath
The warm light of our God's undying love;
And like the perfumed zephyr that doth move
Gently the flowers, we shall the soft air breathe
Of the new day,
And bask within the sunshine of God's sway.
But hark! A messenger hath come from those without.
We'll hear directly how the people are advancing,
And how God with His arms hath compassed us about;
Then must we onward to the goal before us glancing.

SCENE SEVENTH.—THE SAME, with JOSHUA.

MOSES: Worthy supporter of our cause, how is the march
Proceeding, that our God has ordered and conducts
Toward the goal He has appointed? Do the people
To discipline prove pliant, with courageous faith
Advancing, or does fear chaotic and appalling
O'erpower them, direful offspring of unfaith and rumor,
Swollen with the news of Pharoh's armed legions
In pomp and blatant power coming against them?
JOSHUA: Prophet,
Obedient to discipline, in ordered ranks,
The people were advancing to the Red Sea's shore,
Full of fresh hope,—to music that spontaneously
Burst from their hearts advancing,—when untoward Rumor
That Pharaoh had come forth against them with his hosts
Of disciplined soldiers, came and smote them with disorder,
As smites the sea the storm wind—the sea that was unrippled,
Calm as a slumbering infant in the sunshine lying—
And rouses its draconian fury. So the rumor
Of Pharaoh's hosts advancing smote the multitude
With blind commotion. Order was forgotten,—order
That is the outward image of calm faith,—and reigned
Instead dark turbulence, the witness of unreason.
Then had Pharaoh come he would have conquered—conquered,
For his dark power had triumphed in the hearts of that
Blind multitude; but God fought for them in advance.
There was a sound of music heard; unearthly music,
That fell like starlight into those dark troubled souls;
And as when light first dawned on chaos, there arose
Within them order as of a new-created world:
And as the steed tamed by the master's hand, that host,
A mob ruled by unreason, grew a disciplined force,
And forward to the sea marched with courageous faith,
As if grown conscious of unconquerable strength,
It feared no more important Pharoah than were he
And his invincible hosts a pigmy multitude.
CHORUS: Great is our God; He spake and formless chaos heard,
And heaven and earth came into being at His word.
He bade that there be light, and light there was; the light
By day the sun gives forth; the moon and stars by night.

Upon the earth He made the sea, and made the land;
And fish to swim the waters, and beasts at His command
Came into being, and the birds that wing the air.
And man He made, and bade he should His own form bear.
And man He has commissioned to conquer and subdue
The earth, creating it for his own ends anew.
All shall be brought beneath sweet reason's holy sway:

MOSES: The spirit's night is waning before advancing day.
Indeed the fetters of the past are snapped in twain.
The powers that have enthralled us exert their might in vain.
We shall go on resistless as the incoming tide
But tell us, worthy Joshua, what more befell,
That these may know God cares for us, and feel His spell.

JOSHUA: Then did the people see God in the pillar of cloud,
That first went on before them, but when danger threatened,
Retreated to their rear between them and their foes,
That striving to assail us, Pharaoh's armed hosts
Will battle not with us, but God the invincible,
With whom to battle is to wear away one's strength
In a vain war with fate. We are defended thus
With God by armor, rendering invulnerable
Against assaults, that without chariots and arms
More than a match are we for Pharaoh's pigmy might.

CHORUS: Hail God of armies, who hath made Thy people strong;
To whom, and whom alone, doth victory belong!
Thou raisest up a people and Thou castest down:
The mighty dost Thou humble; the lowly dost Thou crown
'Tis but through Thy long-suffering that tyrants sway;
And for their wrongs Thy hand on them doth heavy weigh.
Out of the dust Thou bringest forth a mightier power,
To bring them low when they have raged their little hour.

MOSES: The hour of Pharaoh's struck, and he and all his host
Shall go down into those dark waves that shall o'erwhelm.
Silence shall come down on his multitudes, as night
Comes down upon the earth and stills its tumult,—silence;
But not for us: before us the dark waters open;
And opens the way beyond them through the desert on;
On to the promised land with milk and honey flowing,
Where will be given to manhood its true sphere to act.

JOSHUA: Even such a way is God preparing for us. Back
The winds are driving the obedient waters; back
The multitudinous waves as with the baton driven,
To void for us the place which they have occupied,
Dry shod to traverse to the shore beyond, where freedom
The sentinel is standing, to beckon us come hither,
And leave behind the land of slavery forever.

CHORUS: God, the raging
Billows heed Thy
Voice assuaging.
Thou dost lead Thy
People through them.
Who pursue them,
Bent to slaughter,
Will the water
Flow back over.
Will the surges

Sing their dirges,
Whom they cover.

MOSES: Away, the time for our departure is at hand.
God hath our pathway opened to the promised land.
We have but to go forward and our chains will fall.
The future beckons, where no one can e'er enthrall.
So we be free in spirit there is no power in earth
Or heaven that can withhold from us what is our right.
On to the land where weakness be not oppressed by might,
And where shall be no ruler but he of highest worth!

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